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FINALS BID IS IN THE BAG...

PM BACKS VICTORY!

PHOTO: ANITA MILAS

Another big step towards Brazil 2014

By Pablo Bateson

Every qualifier for the World Cup finals is critical and as our evergreen keeper and captain Mark Schwarzer has just stated when interviewed any result less than a home win versus Oman would be disastrous.

To be a part of Brazil 2014 represents the ultimate hosting destination for participation at World Cup tournaments. There is no bigger stage for international football. In the build up to this Tuesday night, our players, coaching staff, officials and fans alike will be sharing in a range of emotions including confidence, some nervousness, hope and excitement. For myself such feelings are all wrapped into a state of eager anticipation that our team can and will secure the three points.

My own build has been a little different to most national team home games with these pre-game perspectives being compiled in a Bangkok hotel in downtown Silom. Part of this 'preparation' will include attending a Thailand Second Division local derby in this diverse city where football dominates as the most popular sport. A flight back to Sydney arriving on Monday will allow plenty of time to get set for the Socceroos game.

The Homebush Brewery adjacent to the stadium will once again be the main venue for the ritual pre-game meet up of green and gold fans contingents.

An expected crowd of at least 50,000 with singing led by the Home End active supporters will be providing the passionate, vocal and colourful encouragement that is so important to help lift the Socceroos. In the important role of fans, we must leave nothing in the bank by chanting loud and consistently from just before kick off until the final whistle.

The Socceroos indifferent form in the group so far has been a sort of wake-up call where nothing can be assumed, and perhaps this jolt has been a good thing for everyone involved. The late come from behind win over Iraq in Doha emphasised that a re-invigorated campaign was already in motion to get the qualification goal back on track.

With a preference to avoid making predictions for important games of the Socceroos, we have every reason to be optimistic for a home victory.

Conditions are forecast to be favourable for football with mild weather and perhaps some showers, with the latter certainly not favouring the Omanis.

Other than a surprise home loss against China in a 'dead rubber' in June 2008, the ANZ Stadium has been a happy venue for Australia's World Cup qualifiers since that famous play-off victory in November 2005.

Coach Holger Osieck has brought together a well-balanced squad with the right mix of proven big match experience and more youthful talent.

In terms of a starting line-up, some big questions include: Will Holman overcome a lack of game time over the past three months? Can Oar shake off an injury scare when substituted for club Utrecht last weekend? In the absence of Neill, who will be the anchors in central defence; two from Milligan, Thwaite, North, Cornthwaite and Williams. Also, for a potential extra 'x-factor' option in second half; will Rogic make the subs bench?

Regardless of any speculation, our team will be set up to succeed with meticulous attention to detail across every area of preparation, planning, logistics, organisation, and off- field support. It's now left the players to deliver the goods, with our conditional support. Another big step to Brazil 2014 beckons.

Socceroo coach Holger Osieck wil hope that home ground advantage and a big crowd will prove decisive against Oman.

Pablo Bateson has been supporting the Socceroos since 1972, when as a child he watched them play Santos in Sydney with Pele playing. Since 2008, Pablo has travelled to and attended the past 27 consecutive World Cup competition matches of the Socceroos including qualifiers and World Cup finals.

Match Details

2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifier
Qantas Socceroos v Oman
Tuesday 26 March 2013
Stadium Australia, Homebush
Kick-Off: 7:30pm AEDT

Ticket Prices – Single Match Tickets
Category A - $95 all tickets
Category B - $65 Adult, $35 Concession, $165 Family
Category C- $40 Adult, $20 Concession, $95 Family
Australian Active Area - $45 Adult, $25 Concession

Ticket Prices – 10% Discount – General Public 2 match pass
Category A - $171 all tickets
Category B - $117 Adult, $63 Concession, $297 Family
Category C - $72 Adult, $36 Concession, $171 Family

Australian Active Area - $81 Adult, $45 Concession

Ticket Prices are inclusive of GST & Booking Fee. Transaction and credit card fees apply.

For more information, please visit www.footballaustralia.com.au/tickets

Socceroo Squad

Mark BRESCIANO *Al Gharafa QATAR 65 (12),* **Alex BROSQUE** *Al-Ain Club UAE 20 (6),* **Tim CAHILL** *New York Red Bulls USA 60 (26),* **Robert CORNTHWAITE** *Chunnam Dragons KOREA REPUBLIC 6 (3),* **Dino DJULBIC** *Al Wahda Club UAE 2 (0),* **Eugene GALEKOVIC** *(gk), Adelaide United AUSTRALIA 6 (0),* **James HOLLAND** *FK Austria Vienna, AUSTRIA 9 (0),* **Brett HOLMAN**, *Aston Villa ENGLAND 58 (8),* **Mile JEDINAK** *Crystal Palace ENGLAND 37 (3),* **Robbie KRUSE** *Fortuna Dusseldorf GERMANY 22 (2),* **Ryan McGOWAN** *Shandong Luneng Taishan CHINA PR 3 (0),* **Matt McKAY** *Changchun Yatai CHINA 34 (1),* **Mark MILLIGAN** *Melbourne Victory AUSTRALIA 19 (2)* **Jade NORTH** *Brisbane Roar AUSTRALIA 39 (0),* **Tommy OAR** *FC Utrecht NETHERLANDS 6 (0),* **Tom ROGIC** *Celtic SCOTLAND 4 (0),* **Mathew RYAN** *(gk) Central Coast Mariners AUSTRALIA 2 (0),* **Mark SCHWARZER** *(gk) Fulham ENGLAND 104 (0),* **Archie THOMPSON** *Melbourne Victory AUSTRALIA 46 (28),* **Michael THWAITE,** *Perth Glory AUSTRALIA 10 (0),* **Luke WILKSHIRE** *FK Dinamo Moscow, RUSSIA 74 (8),* **Rhys WILLIAMS** *Middlesbrough ENGLAND 11 (0),* **Michael ZULLO** *FC Utrecht NETHERLANDS 10 (0).* *Caps (Goals)*

Group B Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
JAPAN	5	4	1	0	13	2	11	13
AUSTRALIA	4	1	2	1	4	4	0	5
IRAQ	5	1	2	2	4	5	-1	5
OMAN	5	1	2	2	4	7	-3	5
JORDAN	5	1	1	3	4	11	-7	4

Oman 0-0 Australia, Australia 1-1 Japan, Jordan 2-1 Australia, Iraq 1-2 Australia, Australia v Oman, Japan v Australia, Australia v Jordan, Australia v Iraq

Positive Signs For Phoenix Coaching Post

Wellington Phoenix General Manager David Dome says the search for the Phoenix's new Head Coach has started positively with close to 200 applications already received for the role.

With applications arriving daily from all over the world and from as far afield as North America and Europe, Dome is encouraged by the prospects.

"We have received interest from some very high calibre applicants, including some who have coached at the highest levels in Europe" Dome said.

"The fact that the Wellington Phoenix are New Zealand's only professional football team, along with our participation in the Australian Hyundai A-League, offers candidates a point of difference in their careers.

"Couple that with the appeal of the lifestyle that living in New Zealand, and Wellington in particular, offers, then this role is being seen as a unique and very attractive opportunity."

Applications for the role close on Friday 22 March with a shortlist to be established and interviews taking place during April.

"We are keen to complete the process in the next six weeks or so we can move on, but we are also very focussed on finding the right person for the job and will take the time necessary to do this," Dome said.

"While we are getting some well-known names come through, the most important thing for us is to get a Head Coach who understands and will execute the Club's vision.

" We are taking external independent advice from experts outside of the Club to ensure that we get the very best person we can for the job."

The Wellington Phoenix take on the Melbourne Victory in their final home game of the 2012/13 Hyundai A-League season on Sunday 31 March, 4.30pm at Westpac Stadium.

SFC Apologize For Inappropriate Banner

Sydney FC would like to issue an apology to Disability Groups after supporters displayed an inappropriate and unauthorised banner at Allianz Stadium last Saturday night.

The banner was displayed as the teams ran onto the field for Saturday night's clash with Melbourne Victory with the words changed by fans after the usual process of approval was carried out during the week.

"Sydney FC would like to wholeheartedly apologise to Disability Groups and those people offended by the banner and warn our fans that anyone displaying banners of such nature in the future will be banned from attending matches at Allianz Stadium," said Sydney FC CEO Tony Pignata.

"Sydney FC does not condone the actions of the fans in The Cove responsible for displaying an inappropriate banner during the match on Saturday night."

Fans wanting to display banners more than 1m x 1m in size must seek permission from Sydney FC and Allianz Stadium officials, who check for inappropriate or inflammatory remarks or illustrations.

In this instance the words on the banner were changed after the approval process.

"There is a process in place whereby our fans have to submit their plans for the banners, including copies of illustrations and exact wording, and the words on the banner were different to the submitted plan.

"We have spoken to the fan group, voiced our strenuous disapproval and made it known in no uncertain manner that any future breaches will be met with bans from attending matches."

Cahill urges Australia to keep improving

Australia attacker Tim Cahill has challenged his team to keep their momentum going in their World Cup qualifier against Oman on Tuesday.

Cahill has claimed the Socceroos turned a corner in October with their 2-1 win away to Iraq in their last World Cup qualifier and believes Australia cannot afford to miss out on three points when they host Oman in Sydney.

Australia started the fourth round of qualifying in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) with two draws and a loss but moved up to second on goal difference with their win over Iraq.

"I suppose that corner was turned in the last game with the three points and now it's about building on that and progression and not making excuses, just embracing it and hopefully moving forward," Cahill said.

Speaking in Sydney on Tuesday, Cahill has called on his Socceroos teammates to put in a good week on the training pitch and ensure they get the job done at ANZ Stadium next week.

"It's all about the points, really, irrespective of what's happened in the past and an average start," the 33-year-old New York Red Bulls forward said.

The Socceroos will be without regular captain Lucas Neill against Oman as the Sydney FC defender is suspended.

With Matthew Spiranovic injured and Sasa Ognenovski left out of the squad, Australia's manager Holger Osieck will have to select a relatively inexperienced central defensive pairing from Robert Cornthwaite, Dino Djulbic, Rhys Williams, Michael Thwaite, Jade North and Mark Milligan.

Having started five of the Socceroos past six matches, Cornthwaite shapes as a favourite for one of the central defensive berths, although the 27-year-old former Adelaide United player is not getting carried away.

"I'd like to put my hand up to start that game, definitely, but, you know, there's a few days of training beforehand, so I've got to make sure I put my best foot forward," Cornthwaite said.

Cornthwaite has scored three goals in his past five internationals since he was a late call-up for the 2-1 friendly win over South Korea in November but the 199cm tall defender's priorities remain at the other end of the pitch.

"Hopefully I can get on the scoresheet again but I think the main objective is obviously keep a clean sheet and get the three points," Cornthwaite said.

If Australia win on Tuesday and AFC Group B leaders Japan knock off Jordan, the Socceroos will move three points clear in second position.

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Postecoglou to lead A-League All Stars against Manchester Utd

Melbourne Victory coach Ange Postecoglou was named as manager to lead the A-League All Stars against Manchester United for their July clash.

Postecoglou was announced as the inaugural A-League All Stars coach on Monday after winning a fan vote, just edging out Tony Popovic and Graham Arnold to take on the Premier League leaders in Sydney on July 20.

Postecoglou finished with 36.8 percent of the vote, just ahead of the Wanderers boss Popovic (36.2) with Arnold third on 15.4 percent.

"It's a huge thrill and honour to be voted by the fans," Postecoglou told reporters.

"Man United is massive game, a massive club and on the eve of their season there will be a great deal of attention on it.

"Getting the opportunity to deal with the best players in the (A-League) as a coach is one of those unique opportunities I'm really thrilled and honoured to accept.

"It's exciting, to bring a group of players together that otherwise wouldn't ever come together in one team is challenging but what (I am) looking forward to."

On a day of announcements for the match, FFA chief David Gallop also revealed Foxtel as the naming rights sponsor while voting to select the All Stars line-up was declared open.

Fans can now start choosing the players they want in the squad and they will be responsible for 50 percent of the voting.

Another 20 percent will be decided by an expert panel, another 20 percent via the PFA Team of the Year, with the remaining 10 percent going to Postecoglou.

The two-time championship winning coach will also get to pick three players of his own in the 18-man squad.

Regardless of who is in his team, Postecoglou has vowed to go all-out to upstage the 19-time English champions.

"We won't be parking an All-Star bus," he said.

"People that know me and watched me coached the last few years know the style I want to play.

"With these sorts of games it should be a celebration of football. I don't want to go out there and stop Man U from playing their football, we want to showcase what we can do."

"Watch games over the weekend, there isn't a defensive mindset in the A-League... we go at it and that's what we want to display."

Gallop added: "This is a chance to showcase the A-League to the world, taking on one of the biggest clubs in world football.

"This is not just a one-off match, it's the creation of an annual event that celebrates the most popular players and coaches in the A-League."

Postecoglou could be without a number of A-League-based Socceroos players due to the national team's involvement in the East Asian Cup finals in late July.

It won't be the first time Postecoglou will face Manchester United. Back in 2000 Postecoglou coached NSL and Oceania Club champions South Melbourne FC to the FIFA World Club Championship tournament, which was held in Brazil, and lost 2-0 to Sir Alex Ferguson's men in the group stages.

SHORT PASSES

Carrusca injury update

Adelaide United FC playmaker Marcelo Carrusca is set to only miss one game due to a groin injury he sustained in last Friday night's match against the Newcastle Jets.

An MRI scan revealed there is no tear to the area, meaning the skilful Argentinean will likely miss Sunday's clash against the Central Coast Mariners but be a strong chance to face Perth Glory in the Reds' final minor round match of the season on Easter Saturday.

After scoring the equalising goal early in the second half of the 1-1 draw with the Jets, Carrusca was replaced in the 75th minute after being hampered by a groin problem.

The club's medical staff will carefully monitor Carrusca's progress and he is expected to resume running in the next couple of days.

The Reds' only other current injury concern is midfielder Osama Malik who is recovering from an ankle injury, the club hopeful of having him available for the finals series.

EARLY CONFIRMATION OF WEEK 1 FINALS

Football Federation Australia (FFA) has announced the dates, venues and kick off times for Week 1 Elimination Finals of the Hyundai A-League 2013 Finals Series on the weekend of 5-7 April.

Club Members, Football Family Members and the General Public will be able to purchase tickets for the Elimination Finals in Melbourne and Adelaide in a series of ticket 'on sale' windows from next Monday 25 March (see full details below).

The early confirmation is made possible by the fact that Melbourne Victory and Adelaide United have already secured places in the Week 1 Elimination Finals.

Melbourne Victory will play at Etihad Stadium, Melbourne, on Friday 5 April (7.30pm local kick off).

Adelaide United will play at Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide, on Sunday 7 April (4.30pm local kick off).

The opponents will be not be decided until the conclusion of the regular season in Round 27 (28-31 March) and the final standings of Melbourne Victory and Adelaide United in 3rd and 4th positions are confirmed.

The Hyundai A-League 2013 Finals Series will be broadcast Live and Exclusive on FOX SPORTS.

Hyundai A-League 2013 Elimination Finals

Friday 5 April 2013
Melbourne Victory v TBC
Kick off 7.30pm (local)
Etihad Stadium, Melbourne

Sunday 7 April 2013
Adelaide Utd v TBC
Kick off 4.30pm (local)
Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide

Tickets On Sale -

- Monday 25 March 9am – Tuesday 26 March 11pm – Victory/AUFC member pre-sale
- Wednesday 27 March – 9am – 11pm – Football Family pre sale.
- Thursday 28 March 9am – Monday 1 April 11pm General Public on sale.
- Tuesday 2 April 9am – 11pm – Away team member on sale
- Wednesday 3 April 9am – General Public sales re-open

Perth lad chases dream with Blackpool

Former Perth Soccer Club player Connor Thurston has signed for English Championship side Blackpool FC.

Connor 17 from Mount Pleasant in Perth made the move last month with the transfer going through only hours before the English transfer window deadline at the end of the January.

Connor who had been with Perth Soccer Club since he was 10 years old had been developing and improving every year and had a fantastic season with Perth U18s last year winning the Top 5 final and putting in impressive performances throughout the season. Connor then headed off to the UK on his own with the dream of getting some trials and impressing the coaches enough to get the chance of a lifetime.

Arriving in the cold UK winter, Connor managed to get a one day trial with Blackpool and did well enough to be invited back for a week, the week then turned into several weeks but in the build up to Christmas some of matches were postponed making Connor have to wait a bit longer to get a chance in a real game. Connor made a big impression with the Blackpool coaching staff in training and in his matches and was then offered a professional contract with the seasider's.

Perth U18s coach Gavin Tait describes Connor as a dynamic modern day full-back who loves to go forward and attack, but can also defend well and is comfortable playing in different formations and roles. Connor is a great lad with a great personality and has the determination to succeed in the fiercely competitive environment in the UK.

Connor's family are all Liverpool fans including dad Terry, who has encouraged and supported Connor to follow his dream and who will now have to start following the other 'Pool'!

FFA ANNOUNCE COMMUNITY FOOTBALL RESTRUCTURE

Football Federation Australia CEO David Gallop has today announced a restructure of FFA's community football programs.

The key objectives are to improve participation growth in all forms of football, enhance community engagement and better integrate FFA's activities with grassroots stakeholders.

"My priority is to maximise the opportunities that flow from Australian football's single biggest advantage in a very competitive sports landscape – the popularity of the game at the grassroots and our huge participation base," said Gallop.

"Our Member Federations, Associations and Clubs across the nation deserve the credit for making football such a vibrant part of Australian society, but it's the right time to take the next big step forward.

"My review of community football has identified a need to change the way FFA consults, engages and implements its plans.

"The huge growth of indoor football largely outside of the formal structures of the game is one case which shows why we need to adapt if the game is to continue to grow and prosper."

The overhaul will change FFA's management structure, priorities and strategies covering a wide range of grassroots activities, including;

- Player retention and participation growth in club, school, indoor, beach and social football
- A national facilities development plan in conjunction with all tiers of government
- Implementation of a Multicultural Football Strategy
- Collaboration with Member Federations and associations
- Club development and the roll out of the National Competitions Review
- Coach and referee recruitment and education
- Women's football from juniors to over-age
- Engagement via digital channels, in particular MyFootballClub
- Inclusive initiatives for indigenous and disabled communities

The changes will see the establishment of a new Community Football department within FFA, replacing the existing Game Development structure.

Leading the new department will be Emma Highwood, who is promoted to the role of Head of Community Football and has been appointed to FFA's Senior Management Team.

Highwood has been with FFA for four years in the role of National Club Development Manager. In that time, she has driven the roll out of the MyFootballClub national online registration portal, which this year will cover more than 500,000 participants. Emma played a pivotal role in implementation of the National Premier Leagues model.

"I'm delighted to promote Emma Highwood to this new position and have her join my Senior Management Team," said Gallop.

"Emma is a highly motivated and intelligent operator who has vast experience in community football, including women's football.

"Her work with Member Federations, associations and clubs on the MyFootballClub and National Premier Leagues projects has earned her respect among our stakeholders and that will give Emma a head start as she begins this new challenge."

Emma Highwood has thanked David Gallop for the opportunity to develop fresh national strategies for community football.

"The popularity of football is huge, but it's now much more than a traditional outdoor experience," said Highwood.

"Whether it's in schools, indoor, corporate or social park football, FFA needs to respond to the changing preferences of the football community and provide a connection to the game's formal structures."

Emma Highwood's appointment is effective immediately.

SHORT PASSES

Jets upgrade Members to accommodate expected Wanderers demand

The Newcastle Jets, following consultation with the FFA, Newcastle Police and Hunter Venues, is required to upgrade a number of Reserved Memberships for the Round 27 fixture between the Jets and Western Sydney Wanderers at Hunter Stadium.

After lengthy discussions between all parties, Members seated in the Eastern Grandstand bays 8, 9, 10, 19, 20, 21 and 22 will be contacted this week and advised about the upgrade.

The upgrade for Members is required to make provisions for the large numbers expected to travel from the Wanderers' supporter base.

"We have been in discussions with the FFA, Newcastle Police and Hunter Stadium for a number of weeks about accommodating the estimated 6,000 plus supporters that will travel for this game at Hunter Stadium," CEO Robbie Middleby said.

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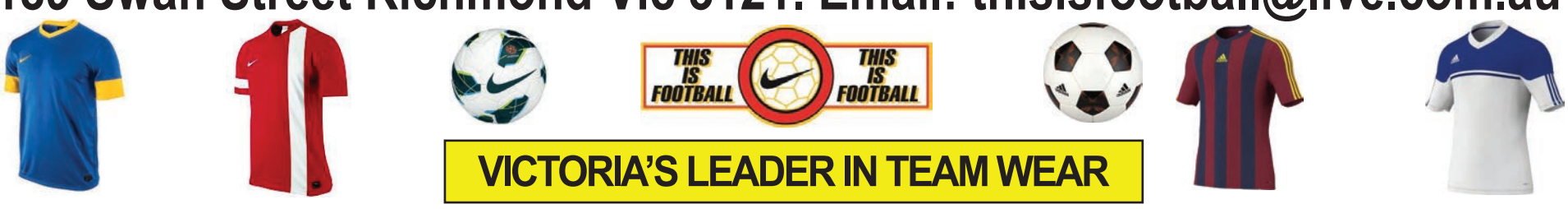

VICTORIA'S LEADER IN TEAM WEAR

SCOREBOARD

TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 West Sydney Wanderers	25	17	2	6	37	20	17	53
2 Central Coast Mariners	25	14	6	5	44	21	23	48
3 Melbourne Victory	25	12	5	8	43	40	3	41
4 Adelaide United	25	12	4	9	37	34	3	40
5 Sydney FC	25	9	4	12	39	47	-8	31
6 Newcastle Jets	26	8	7	11	30	42	-12	31
7 Brisbane Roar	25	8	5	12	28	28	0	29
8 Perth Glory	25	8	4	13	25	28	-3	28
9 Melbourne Heart	25	8	3	14	30	36	-6	27
10 Wellington Phoenix	26	7	6	13	29	46	-17	27

THIS WEEK

ROUND 26	FIXTURE	VENUE	LOCAL	AEDT
Sat Mar 23	Melbourne Victory v Perth Glory	AAMI Park	5:30pm	5:30pm
Sat Mar 23	West Sydney Wanderers v Sydney FC	Parramatta Stadium	7:45pm	7:45pm
Sun Mar 24	Brisbane Roar v Melbourne Heart	Suncorp Stadium	4:00pm	5:00pm
Sun Mar 24	Adelaide United v Central Coast Mariners	Hindmarsh Stadium	6:30pm	7:00pm

NEXT WEEK

ROUND 27	FINAL ROUND FIXTURE	VENUE	LOCAL	AEDT
Thu Mar 28	Brisbane Roar v Sydney FC	Suncorp Stadium	7:00pm	8:00pm
Fri Mar 29	Newcastle Jets v West Sydney Wanderers	Hunter Stadium	5:30pm	5:30pm
Sat Mar 30	Central Coast Mariners v Melbourne Heart	Bluetongue Stadium	5:30pm	5:30pm
Sat Mar 30	Perth Glory v Adelaide United	nib Stadium	6:45pm	9:45pm
Sun Mar 31	Wellington Phoenix v Melbourne Victory	Westpac Stadium	4:30pm	2:30pm

ROUND 25 RESULTS

Adelaide United FC 1 *(Carrusca 49')*
Newcastle Jets 1 *(Bridges 44')*
Crowd: 7,284 @ Hindmarsh Stadium

Central Coast Mariners 1 *(Ibini '35)*
Brisbane Roar 0
Crowd: 7,225 @ Bluetongue Stadium

Sydney FC 1 *(Yau 85)*
Melbourne Victory 1 *(Milligan 3)*
Crowd: 22,233 @Allianz Stadium

Perth Glory 1 *(Nagai 75)*
Wellington Phoenix 2 *(Ifill 35, Huysegems 67)*
Crowd: 6360 @ nib Stadium

Melbourne Heart 1 *(Mebrahtu 37)*
Western Sydney Wanderers 3 *(Haliti 28, 60, La Rocca 88)*
Crowd: 6101 at AAMI Park

TOP GOAL SCORERS

15 - Daniel McBREEN (Mariners)
Jeremy BROCKIE (Phoenix)
14 - Marco ROJAS (Victory)
12 - Besart BERISHA (Roar)
Alessandro DEL PIERO (SFC)
9 - Emile HESKEY (Jets)
Ryan GRIFFITHS (Jets)
Mark BRIDGE (Wanderers)
Dario VIDOSIC (Adelaide)
8 - Mark MILLIGAN (Victory)

Melbourne Victory's Mark Milligan has been on song of late and another goal in the Big Blue derby has the Socceroo nudging towards the front runners. Not a bad effort at all for the defensive midfielder. Maybe more to come in finals time too!

A-LEAGUE TEAM OF THE WEEK Round 25

Compiled by Steven Talevski

GK: Nathan Coe – This week's toughest decisions was in the goalkeeping department with a number of outstanding performances with Coe being the pick of the bunch. Coe made a bunch of great saves highlighted by the save from Alessandro Del Piero's penalty.

RB: Scott Galloway – With Victory missing two key defenders, the seventeen year old once again stepped up and proved that age is no matter with a fantastic performance.

CB: Trent Sainsbury – Although playing right back this week, Sainsbury gets a spot filling in the centre of defence in Goal! Weekly's team of the week after an impressive defensive game in the Mariners one nil victory.

CB: Andrew Durante – Now a New Zealand citizen, Durante was superb in defence against the Glory as the Phoenix picked up an upset win over Perth.

LB: Dylan Murnane – Making his debut in the Big Blue was no easy introduction to professional football for Murnane who did extremely well when called upon in defence for the Victory and repaid Ange Postecoglous faith in youth.

RM: Paul Ifill – A regular last season in Goal! Weekly's team of the week, Ifill makes his return after finding the back of the net away to the Glory in a shock 2-1 win.

CM: Iacopo La Rocca – With Shinji Ono out injured, Tony Popovic brought the Italian into the Wanderers midfield against the Heart. La Rocca did like he has all season when called upon, performed well and even found himself on the scoresheet at the final whistle.

CM: Terry Antonis – After being our star man last week, Antonis had another terrific game in the sky blue midfield, supporting both attack and defence.

LM: Bernie Ibini – The Mariners number 9 was played out wide this weekend and was a constant attacking threat that saw him score the game's only goal.

ST: Labinot Haliti – The resurgence of Haliti has been a highlight of recent weeks for the Wanderers and the Kosovo born attacker was a standout this week scoring a double as Western Sydney made it ten wins in a row.

ST: Jeremy Brockie – He may not have been on the score sheet this week, but Brockie was once again heavily involved in the Phoenix attacks including both goals which included a terrific cross to Stein Huysegems for Wellingtons second.

Coach: Chris Greenacre – With Glory needing to pick up the three points, bottom placed Wellington made the A-Leagues longest road trip over Perth and picked up a shock 2-1 victory. Greenacre put out an extremely attacking line up which has to be congratulated. However what was also evident was his team's willingness to defend and fight. With candidates putting their hand up for the Phoenix full time coaching role, Greenacre did his chances no harm.

Star Man

Labinot Haliti
Wanderers

Having been in and out of the Wanderers line up this season, Haliti has stepped up in the last few weeks in an attempt to cement his spot in the starting eleven. His two goals this week were calmly taken as his form has come at the right time for the Wanderers with them having one hand on the minor premiership.

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Officials steal the show in Reds and Jets clash

Adelaide United 1

Newcastle Jets 1

Match Details

Adelaide United FC 1 (Carrusca 49')
Newcastle Jets 1 (Bridges 44')
Referee: Lucien Laverdure
Crowd: 7,284 @ Hindmarsh Stadium

Adelaide United: 1.Eugene Galekovic (gk) (c), 3.Nigel Boogaard, 4.Jon McKain, 5.Iain Fyfe, 6.Cassio, 8.Marcelo Carrusca (18.Fabian Barbiero 75'), 10.Dario Vidosic, 14.Cameron Watson, 17.Iain Ramsay (22.Fabio Ferreira 70'), 19.Jake Barker-Daish, 25.Tomi Juric (21.Jeronimo Neumann 61')
Substitutes not used: 20.Paul Izzo (gk)
Yellow Cards: Vidosic 52'
Red Cards: Nil

Newcastle Jets: 20.Mark Birighitti (gk), 3.Zenon Caravella, 5.Dominik Ritter, 7.James Brown (26.Andrew Hoole 65'), 8.Ruben Zadkovich (c), 11.Connor Chapman, 12.Josh Brillante, 15.Craig Goodwin (17.James Virgili 88'), 19.Michael Bridges (2.Scott Neville 90+3'), 21.Marko Jesic, 22.Adam Taggart
Substitutes not used: 30.Jack Duncan (gk)
Yellow Cards: Brown 15', Goodwin 45+1', Jesic 66'
Red Cards: Nil

By Matt Mays

Adelaide and the Newcastle Jets shared the spoils at Hindmarsh last Friday night, but it was a game full of controversy and some questionable officiating.

The Jets had two goals pencilled out in the first half, whilst Dario Vidosic's stoppage time strike but brought back for a very dubious offside decision, which left the crowd and players frothing with anger.

In the end though, a draw was probably a fair result. Although the game didn't really affect Adelaide besides a missed opportunity to build some momentum heading into the Finals series, the Jets however now have to rely on other results as they have a game less remaining in comparison to the teams around them.

Adelaide handed youngster Barker-Daish his second successive start, after pleasing the Adelaide faithful with a good full debut at Melbourne Heart the week before. Ferreira made his way to the bench after this comeback in the same game, whilst the Jets were still missing marquee man Heskey, although ex-Red Caravella returned from injury.

The Jets started the brighter early doors. Zadkovish struck hard from 25 metres but Galekovic, who was still celebrating after his Socceroo call up, palmed wide.

The resulting corner provided the first talking point of the game when Chapman's header into the net was ruled out after it appeared that the Galekovic was fouled.

It was then Adelaide's turn to hit back. McKain fed a lovely ball through to Vidosic after a smart dummy from Juric but the Socceroo shot wide when he really should have hit the target.

Newcastle had the ball in the net again minutes later, but again it was chalked off. Taggart was the culprit this time with a marginal offside decision going against him. The Reds though should have been a goal to the good after 18 minutes after a piece of football magic from both sides. Vidosic again involved, bringing down a lofted through ball, dinking it over the last defender before unleashing a fierce first time volley only to be denied at point blank range from a Brigitte save. Lovely stuff!

Adelaide's hard work should have been undone though on 22 minutes. Ritter smashing the bar from 1 metre out for the Jets after a goal mouth scramble. It looked easier to score than to miss.

An almost comical first half was complete with a moment of madness which eventually leads to the Jets opening goal. An under pressure Galekovic picked up a Watson throw in which provided the Jets with an indirect free kick from 12 yards. Goodwin smashed the ball toward goal but the last touch came from ex-Leeds United star Michael Bridges. The Jets took a priceless lead into halftime.

Adelaide came rushing out of the blocks in the second half as Currusca fired home the equaliser after a great solo run down the middle. The Argentine struck the ball sweetly from 25 metres and it curled round the keeper.

The goal should have sparked the Adelaide to push on for a second. It didn't. The match took an unexpected turn into a lethargic affair until the introduction of Jeromino after 60 minutes as he replaced the in-affective Juric.

With just 3 minutes gone after coming on as a substitute, the Argentine scraped the bar with a gorgeous header.

The game became a bit tetchy and looked to have been heading for a draw until some very late drama. Heading into stoppage time, Newcastle has a good shout for a penalty after Boogard and Bridged collided in the box, but the ref waved play on, whilst at the other end, Adelaide thought they had grabbed the winner.

Vidosic found himself with space behind the defence and collected a cross, fired home and sent the Red Army into wild raptures. The cheers turned to jeers though as the linesman had his flag up high. Replays proved that Vidosic was nowhere near offside, but hinted Jeromino was the culprit after coming back from an offside position.

The full time whistle brought the loudest jeers I have heard at Hindmarsh this season, with bottles thrown towards the officials. These were ugly scenes and Valkanis admitted his players felt the pain.

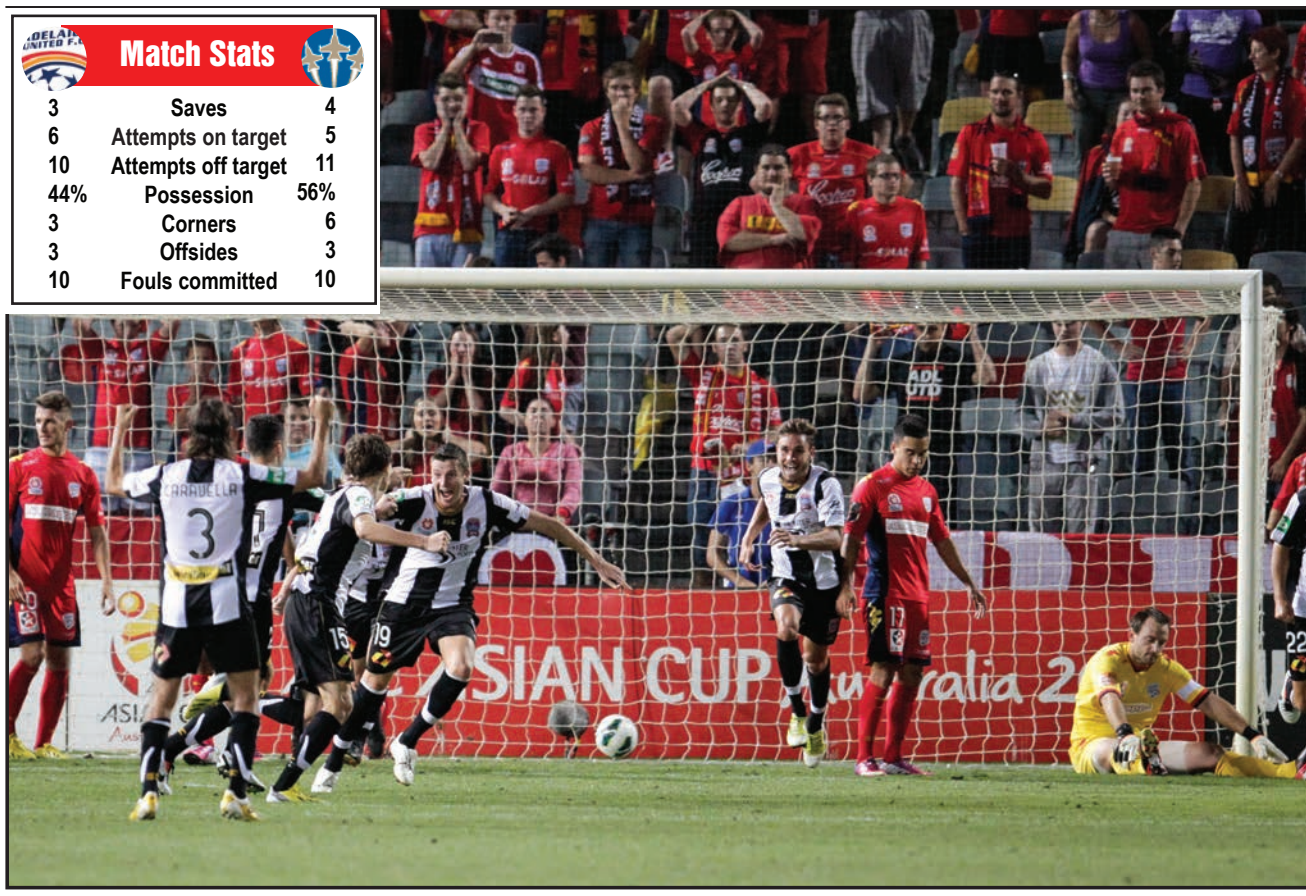
"The players in the dressing are acting like they lost the grand final."

"I've been trying to cheer them up because that second half performance was excellent tonight."

Man of the Match
Dario Vidosic
(Adelaide United)

Match Stats

3	Saves	4
6	Attempts on target	5
10	Attempts off target	11
44%	Possession	56%
3	Corners	6
3	Offsides	3
10	Fouls committed	10



Michael Bridges was in the right place at the right time to get the final touch, as the Jets break the deadlock with a close range free-kick. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

Adelaide United are back on levels terms thanks to a special strike by Argentine Marcelo Carrusca. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

Jets keeper Mark Birighitti comes up trumps and pulls of a spectacular save amidst a crowded penalty area. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

Wanderers Within Touching Distance Of Plate

Melbourne Heart 1

West Sydney 3

Match Details

Melbourne Heart FC 1 (Golgol Mabrathu 39')
Western Sydney Wanderers 3 (Labinot Haliti 29', 60', Iacopo La Rocca 88')
Venue: AAMI Park
Saturday, 16 March 2013
Referee: Ben Williams
Attendance: 6,101

Melbourne Heart: 20. Andrew Redmayne, 4. Simon Colosimo, 5. Fred (22. Nick Kalmar 75'), 6. Patrick Gerhardt, 8. Matt Thompson, 10. Josip Tadic, 11. Richard Garcia, 13. Jonatan Germano, 14. Golgol Mebrathu, 25. Jeremy Walker (15. David Williams 67').

Unused substitutes: 1. Clint Bolton, 16. Marcel Meeuwis

Yellow cards: Patrick Gerhardt 43', Simon Colosimo 75', 80'.

Red cards: Simon Colosimo 80'

Western Sydney Wanderers: 1. Ante Covic, 3. Adam D'Apuzzo, 4. Nikolai Topor-Stanley, 5. Michael Beauchamp, 6. Jerome Polenz (2. Shannon Cole 29'), 7. Labinot Haliti (23. Jason Trifiro 88'), 8. Mateo Poljak, 10. Aaron Mooy (9. Dino Kresinger 71'), 17. Youssouf Hersi, 18. Iacopo La Rocca, 19.Mark Bridge,

Unused substitutes: 20. Jerrad Tyson

Yellow cards: Mateo Poljak 42', Adam D'Apuzzo 58', Youssouf Hersi 83'

Red cards: Nil

By Roy Hay

Western Sydney Wanderers are within touching distance of the A-League title after a three-one away win over Melbourne Heart at a wet AAMI Park on Saturday night.

Though the home team put up a spirited fight in the latter part of the first half, and the first period of the second, in the end the result reflected the gulf in class between the sides. The Wanderers were first to the ball and always had options for their passes, while Heart matched them for a while but gave the ball away in critical situations and did not always man up when that happened. Thus two of the three goals came about when it seemed that Heart might be breaking clear of its own defensive area, but the turnovers proved fatal.

Melbourne Heart coach John Aloisi wielded the axe after last week's dismal performance against Adelaide United. Paying the price were David Williams, Eli Babalj, Nick Kalmar and Marcel Meeuwis. In came Patrick Gerhardt, Fred, Jonathan Germano and young Sam Mitchinson. Western Sydney Wanderers lost Shinji Ono to a hamstring strain, with Aaron Mooy stepping in, but otherwise was on normal lines chasing its tenth win in a row.

The Wanderers went ahead in 29 minutes after Heart gave the ball away on the right and Mark Bridge ran to the byeline unchallenged before cutting the ball back to Aaron Mooy in the centre of the penalty area. The blond midfielder fed Labinot Haliti whose precise shot took the inside of the post on the way into the net.

Heart got a scintillating equaliser when skipper Fred released Golgol Mebrahtu. He took one touch to line things up then blasted the ball inside Ante Covic's right hand post. That was in the 39th minute. That stunning goal lifted the Heart and just before the break it seemed they had taken the lead only for the 'goal' to be disallowed. Mebrathu's free kick was headed goalwards by Richard Garcia and Josip Tadic took a swing at the ball as it went past him. It is doubtful whether he actually got a touch and he did not seem to be impeding any of the Wanderers especially keeper Covic. From side on it was clear that three Heart players were momentarily in an offside position, so the assistant referee's flag was understandable. However, the incident divided opinion among referees, inspectors and media commentators alike, and it did mean that Heart's fightback was stalled. Patrick Gerhardt was booked for his protest at the decision.

Heart started the second half well, but the wind was taken out of them when Haliti scored his second goal on the hour. Mark Bridge was involved again and he squared the ball to Iacopo La Rocca who measured a pass to Haliti for a clear opening which he did not waste by lifting the ball over the keeper.

Simon Colosimo was booked for a challenge on Wanderers' substitute Dino Kresinger in 75 minutes, but five minutes later he went straight through the same player from behind. He left the referee Ben Williams with no option but to send him off.

Following his departure any chance of Heart saving the game disappeared and with a couple of minutes left La Rocca expertly controlled a spiralling high ball before cutting across the penalty area and curling the ball round Redmayne for the Wanderer's third goal.

John Aloisi said afterwards, 'We can't give up. It is not in my nature to give up. We have had a great home record until the last two defeats, why not win two in a row away to end the season?' I love his glass half-full approach to any adversity and he was right to point to a much better performance than in the loss to Adelaide.

Tony Popovic is not a man who gets ahead of himself and was not about to claim the title or look forward to the finals series. 'We will focus on next week. We have a big derby coming up (against Sydney on 23 March). We will control what we can and look at finals if and when we get there.' His players have done him proud this year already.

Singing In The Rain: The traveling RBB on Tour fans are ecstatic after Labinot Haliti was on target for a rain-soaked brace, and the Wanderers take another giant step towards the Premiers Plate. Photo: ANITA MILAS

Match Stats

7	Saves	2
3	Attempts on target	10
5	Attempts off target	9
53%	Possession	47%
7	Corners	7
2	Offsides	1
14	Fouls committed	17

Man of the Match
Labinot Haliti
(Western Sydney)

Iacopo La Rocca celebrates with Dino Kresinger after his superbly taken goal. Photo: ANITA MILAS

Heart pull back on to level terms thanks to Golgol Mehbrathu's stunning strike. Photo: ANITA MILAS

Roar and Victory Share Spoils In Quality Clash

Sydney FC 1

Melbourne Victory 1

Match Details

Sydney FC 1 (Yairo Yau 85)
Melbourne Victory 1 (Mark Milligan 3)
Allianz Stadium
Crowd: 22,233
Referee: Strebre Delovski

Sydney FC: 1. Ivan Necevski (Gk), 2. Sebastian Ryall, 7. Brett Emerton, 8. Adam Griffiths, 10. Alessandro Del Piero, 13. Tiago Calvano, 17. Terry Antonis, 22. Ali Abbas (16. Joel Chianese 64'), 23. Rhyan Grant, 26. Peter Triantis (12. Blake Powell '78), 29. Joel Griffiths (21. Yairo Yau '71).

Substitute Not Used: 20. Vedran Janjetovic(Gk).
Yellow Cards: Ali Abbas 29', Sebastian RyaLl 31', Tiago Calvano 90'

Melbourne Victory: 39. Nathan Coe (Gk), 5. Mark Milligan, 6. Leigh Broxham, 10. Archie Thompson (13. Diogo Ferreira '84), 11. Marco Rojas, 14. Billy Celeski, 21. Spase Dilevski (17. James Jeggo '69), 31. Scott Galloway, 32. Connor Pain, 33. Daniel Mullen, 34. Dylan Murnane (18. Francesco Stella '86).

Substitute Not Used: 1. Tando Velaphi(Gk).
Yellow Cards: Nathan Coe 16', Billy Celeski 32'

By David Mason

Allianz Stadium witnessed the match of the season tonight as Sydney FC and Melbourne Victory played out a pulsating 1-1 draw in front of 22,233 fans.

Melbourne midfielder Mark Milligan gave the Victory the lead in the 3rd minute before an 85th minute equaliser from Yairo Yau gave the Sky Blues a well-deserved share of the spoils.

That Sydney FC goalkeeper Ivan Necevski and Victory custodian Nathan Coe were the best two players on the park speaks volumes for the attacking brilliance the game provided as chances were created regularly at both ends.

Necevski only came into the game at the last minute after regular Sydney FC goalkeeper Vedran Janjetovic was dropped to the bench after arriving late at the stadium, and he took his chance with both hands.

The draw sees Sydney move into 5th position on the A-League ladder ahead of two crucial away matches against Western Sydney and Brisbane Roar.

Terry Antonis led the way for the Sky Blues, producing a career best performance, whilst Tiago Calvano was phenomenal marshalling the troops in the back line.

Frank Farina made two changes to the side that defeated the Mariners last start with Necevski joined in the starting side by Ali Abbas, who replaced the injured Terry McFlynn.

With the first attack of the match, the Victory took the lead through Milligan. Archie Thompson started the attack, releasing Connor Pain down the left flank and the youngster ran to the by-line and sent in a low cross that the Socceroo prodded home.

After the early setback Sydney managed to regain a foothold in the match, dominating possession, although Melbourne Victory were always dangerous.

Abbas also threatened early, combining with Rhyan Grant to float in a great ball to Antonis, which the youngster could only head straight at Coe.

Coe's next involvement nearly saw the Victory custodian sent from the field. Calvano sent a direct ball in the path of Del Piero, which Coe intercepted catching the ball outside his own area with Del Piero poised to strike but referee Strebre Delovski deemed a yellow card was necessary.

The resultant free kick saw Del Piero fire just over the crossbar, the first of two attempts by the Italian to fly wide in the space of five minutes.

In between the set piece chances for Sydney, Melbourne so nearly doubled their advantage with Thompson seeing a goal bound effort blocked fantastically by Adam Griffiths.

With seven minutes of the first half remaining Allianz Stadium erupted, crying for a penalty after a handball by Leigh Broxham but referee Delovski waved play on and the teams went to the break with the visitors holding a 1-0 lead.

The second half continued at the unrelenting pace the first half produced, with Sydney continuing to lay siege on Coe's goal.

The first ten minutes of the second stanza saw Sydney miss three golden chances to equalise.

Abbas was the first to go close seeing a swerving drive beat Coe, but frustratingly also the left hand post.

After being fouled for a third time by Broxham, Del Piero finally found his set piece range, seeing his effort deflect off the wall with the rebound falling only inches past the outstretched boot of Antonis.

The Italian then scuffed an effort straight at Coe with the goal at his mercy after being found by a fantastic cross from Brett Emerton on the right hand by-line.

After surviving the onslaught the Victory should have scored only for Necesvki to deny Rojas with an outstanding save after Thompson caught the Sydney defence on the counter.

After seeing his counterpart produce a fantastic save, Coe produced a fine save shortly after, denying Del Piero from the penalty spot. Coe dived full length to his right to divert ADP's penalty past the far post, redeeming debutant teammate Dylan Murnane, whose handball led to the spot kick.

With Sydney pushing large numbers forward in search of an equaliser chances flowed at both ends with the Victory looking threatening on the counter.

The influx of chances provided both goalkeepers the chance to continue to excel with Necevski stopping Rojas brilliantly on three occasions in the space of five minutes and Coe finger tipping a whizzing Del Piero free-kick onto the crossbar.

With The Cove increasingly anxious, Yairo Yau lifted the roof off the stadium as he headed home an 85th minute equaliser from Sydney's 14th corner of the night. Del Piero delivered a wicked set piece from the right which Rhyan Grant flicked on to a waiting Yau at the far post, with the Panamanian making no mistake.

Not content with the draw Sydney looked to snatch a late winner with Del Piero, Emerton and Grant all seeing attempts fly the wrong side of the post.

Though a late winner wasn't found, Sydney can take enormous courage in the race for a spot in the A-League finals series.

Man of the Match
Terry Antonis
(Sydney FC)

Match Stats

7	Saves	8
10	Attempts on target	7
21	Attempts off target	8
50%	Possession	50%
16	Corners	6
3	Offsides	1
16	Fouls committed	16

Mark Milligan arrives right on time to finish off a sweeping move for Melbourne Victory. Photo: ALI ERHAN

Yairo Yau is on hand at the far post to level the scores late in the Big Blue Derby. Photo: ALI ERHAN

Brett Emerton (Sydney FC) is forced to go to ground by Jimmy Jeggo (Victory). Photo: ALI ERHAN

Happy Days at Arnold's? Not quite…

By Adrian Deans

CC Mariners 1

Brisbane Roar 0

Match Details

Central Coast Mariners 1 (Bernie Ibini 34')
Brisbane Roar 0
Sunday, 17 March 2013
Bluetongue Stadium, Gosford
Referee: Alan Milliner

Central Coast Mariners: 1. Mat Ryan (Gk), 2. Daniel McBreen, 3. Joshua Rose, 5. Zachary Anderson, 6. Patrick Zwaanswijk, 7. John Hutchinson (C), 9. Bernie Ibini, 14. Michael Mcglinchey (19. Mitchell Duke 67'), 16. Trent Sainsbury, 18. Nick Montgomery, 29. Nick Fitzgerald (11. Oliver Bozanic 61')
Substitutes Not Used: 13. Brent Griffiths, 20. Justin Pasfield (Gk)

Yellow Cards: John Hutchinson 86'
Red Cards: Nil

Brisbane Roar: 1. Michael Theo (Gk), 3. Shane Stefanutto, 5. Ivan Franjic, 7. Besart Berisha, 9. Stefan Nijland, 13. Jade North, 14. Steven Lustica (17. Mitch Nichols 61'), 15. James Donachie, 18. Luke Brattan (8. Massimo Murdocca 78'), 19. Jack Hingert, 22. Thomas Broich (C)
Substitutes Not Used: 20. Matt Acton (Gk)

Yellow Cards: Jack Hingert 37', James Donachie 90+3'
Red Cards: Nil

In my preview to this game I suggested it was the penalty yips that were causing the Mariners to get nervy and lose confidence. Fortunately, they didn't get a penalty in this game so didn't have to go through the agony of missing yet again. Mind you, they should have had one – referee Milliner can't possibly have missed James Donachie's blatant handball – the only possible conclusion is that Milliner is such a rusted on Mariners fan, he refused to point to the spot.

This was a strange game. With the Mariners tired and down on confidence, the resurgent Roar should have been desperate for the win that would have put them back in the top six. Instead, they sat back and let the home side dictate terms, and frankly, the Mariners should have had four by half time.

It's not just penalties that give the Mariners the willies – it's any simple chance in front of goal. Theo brilliantly tipped over McGlinchey's point blank volley and then was at full stretch to parry McBreen's bullet header – but how did Ibini miss the rebound from three metres out?

Indeed, the goal he did score a few minutes later was far harder, requiring him to get past three defenders in a tight space and then beat Theo at his near post. An excellent goal that will have the Club Bruges apparatchiks patting themselves on the back for their scouting prowess.

It should have been more. McBreen turned McGlinchey's cross against the post from six metres and then Fitzgerald ran onto Ibini's brilliant through ball, chipped the ball into the path of McGlinchey who should have done much better from ten metres. Another great save from Theo but, seriously, the game should have been over and Graham Arnold should have been able to relax and enjoy the second half instead of tearing his hair and having kittens.

Mike Mulvey would have convinced his team at half time that the Mariners were tightly strung and ready to snap. "If we get one, we'll get three," would have been the message, and the Roar finally started to get a toehold. A bloody good toehold – they really dominated possession in the first half of the second half and it wasn't long before Mat Ryan began to feature in the game – punching away several dangerous corners and saving superbly from Nijland when the Dutchman was one-on-one.

I was surprised at how long Mulvey took to get Murdocca and Mitch Nichols into the game. Murdocca has traditionally been a handful for the Mariners, especially at Bluetongue. His tight, nippy style – moving the ball quickly across the park – has caused problems and helped pull the screening pair of Hutchison and Montgomery out of position. The Mariners did have some more nervy moments towards the end, not least Nichols' well struck shot from way out that just missed the woodwork, and Nijland's free kick that smacked against it.

So tense were the players and home fans, that when the fourth official indicated four minutes to play there was a chorus of boos from the stand, which intensified with angry frustration when Milliner's whistle remained obstinately silent after four minutes had ticked away.

In the sixth minute of added time Jade North had a final chance to square the ledger but ploughed his twelve metre volley into the stratosphere – and finally, Mr Milliner had seen enough. Fans and players reacted with jubilant relief, to be back in the winner's circle after all these weeks, and also to claim a home semi final with an immediate crack at the season decider.

But you could hardly say the Mariners were back in form. They're playing alright but they must resolve their problems with finishing easy chances if they are to have any hope of silverware in a season they've mostly dominated.

At some point, the Mariners are likely to take a penalty again this season – maybe even five of them to make the Grand Final. It will take coolness of Fonzarelli proportions to step up and restore the Happy Days to Arnold's arena.

Adrian Deans is the author of Mr Cleansheets – www.mrcleansheets.com and coming shortly – Straight Jacket. Watch this space.

Man of the Match
Bernie Ibini (Mariners)

Bernie Ibini finishes off some fancy footwork with a well taken goal. Photo: KAREN DOUGLAS

Match Stats

2	Saves	4
5	Attempts on target	4
12	Attempts off target	6
47%	Possession	53%
8	Corners	6
3	Offsides	6
15	Fouls committed	8

Jade North (Roar) and Daniel McBreen (Mariners) fly high for the header. Photo: KAREN DOUGLAS

Roar keeper Michael Theo had a busy afternoon and somehow keeps Patrick Zwaanswijk's goal-bound effort out of the onion bag. Photo: KAREN DOUGLAS

Phoenix Dent Glory's Finals Aspirations

Perth Glory 1

Wellington Phoenix 2

Match Details

Perth Glory 1 (Nagai 75)
Wellington Phoenix 2 (Ifill 35, Huysegems 67)
Crowd: 6360 @ nib Stadium

Perth Glory: 1.Danny Vukovic, 7.Jacob Burns, 9.Shane Smeltz (13. Travis Dodd 64'), 10.Liam Miller (28. Daniel De Silva), 12.Ryo Nagai, 14.Steven McGarry, 17.Chris Harold (6.Nick Ward 90'), 19.Matias Jesus Cordoba, 19.Joshua Risdon, 21.Scott Jamieson, 23.Michael Thwaite.

Yellow Cards: Miller, Cordoba.
Red Cards: None

Wellington Phoenix: 20.Glen Moss, 2.Manny Muscat, 3.Tony Lochhead (4.Isaka Cernak 62'), 7.Leo Bertos, 8.Paul Ifill (15.Cameron Lindsay 81'), 10.Stein Huysegems (21.Daniel Sanchez 89'), 11.Jeremy Brockie, 14.ian Hogg, 18.Ben Sigmund, 22.Andrew Durante, 23.Corey Gamiero.

Yellow Cards:Lochhead, Bertos, Ifill, Durante, Gameiro.
Red Cards: None

By Joe Gallagher

Perth Glory's finals hopes have taken a serious blow after they slumped to a 2-1 home loss against Wellington Phoenix on Sunday.

It took goals from Paul Ifill and Stein Huysgems and an inspired goalkeeping performance from Glen Moss to hold off the Glory and add an element of respectability to the Phoenix's season.

It means Alistair Edwards' men are three points below the sixth-placed Newcastle Jets, ahead of a trip to Melbourne Victory and visit from Adelaide United to round out the regular season.

The visitors, whose finals hopes have been and gone, lift themselves alongside Melbourne Heart at the bottom of the ladder, with just a home match against the Victory to come.

Edwards would no doubt have targeted three points against the league's cellar-dwellars, who had to travel the width of Australia in what has been dubbed the A-League's 'distance derby'.

His opposite number, Chris Greenacre, has won two of his four games in charge of the Phoenix, and has strengthened his claim to remain at the club in some coaching capacity next season.

He went into the game without Vince Lia, who suffered a broken toe in training during the week. A defensive reshuffle saw Manny Muscat return to midfield, and gave starts to Ian Hogg and Huysegems, who returned after serving a one week suspension.

Wellington shaded the opening exchanges but had Moss to thank for keeping them level after half an hour. The All Whites stopper dived smartly to his left to deny Matias Cordoba from nine yards.

Minutes later the Glory were made to pay for the miss. Jeremy Brockie – around whom much of the focus had been pre-game due to his goalscoring exploits this season – outmuscled Jacob Burns before his shot fell into the path of Ifill.

The Barbadan's first goal from open play this season was far from pretty, as he stole in ahead of Josh Risdon to prod home, but the relief was clear for all to see as Ifill registered a rare moment of success in what has been one of his most disappointing seasons in New Zealand.

Moss was on hand again to deny Shane Smeltz and Liam Miller to retain the Phoenix's one goal advantage going into half time.

It took a desperate tackle to deny Smeltz a tap in at the start of the second spell before the Glory were hit with the sucker-punch after an hour.

Brockie was again the provider, delivering an inch-perfect ball for Huysegems to nod across Danny Vukovic and into the corner of the net. The Belgian's fourth goal of the season – and first since round four – will be another welcome reward for his efforts, but a reminder to the Yellow Fever of what might have been had the likes of Huysegems and Ifill been firing all season long.

Wellington could have put the game to bed with chances to Ifill and captain Andrew Durante before they were made to work for the result in the final fifteen minutes.

Steven McGarry found space on the right wing and his centre was met by Ryo Nagai, arguably Perth's best on the day, who outjumped Muscat to power a header past Moss and restore hope for a small crowd at nib Stadium.

Perth failed to muster any more genuine opportunities until the final minute of stoppage time. Travis Dodd raced clear of his marker to be one-on-one with Moss, but fittingly it was the goalkeeper who had the final say of a match in which he was almost unbreakable.

The Phoenix clung on to record just their seventh win of a dour campaign, and avoided a record-equalling eighth straight loss away from home.

Many of Greenacre's men will link up with their old coach Ricki Herbert this week for international duty before returning to the Phoenix for their last push at avoiding the wooden spoon.

Perth now face an undoubtedly difficult ask to make the top six, having to take six points – you would think - from matches against two of the sides above them on the ladder.

If unsuccessful they will no doubt look to this performance as when their hopes were extinguished.

The Phoenix get that winning feeling again after a sombre few weeks. Stein Huysegems' goal set the tone for the afternoon. Photo: CRAIG ECCLES

Match Stats

4	Saves	3
4	Attempts on target	6
7	Attempts off target	3
53%	Possession	47%
6	Corners	4
2	Offsides	2
10	Fouls committed	17

Man of the Match
PAUL IFILL
(Wellington Phoenix)

Paul Ifill caps off a great afternoon and return to form for the Phoenix with a well taken goal. Photo: CRAIG ECCLES

Tony Lochhead (Phoenix) gets the better of Steven McGarry (Glory) in this heading contest Photo: CRAIG ECCLES

PICS OF ROUND 25

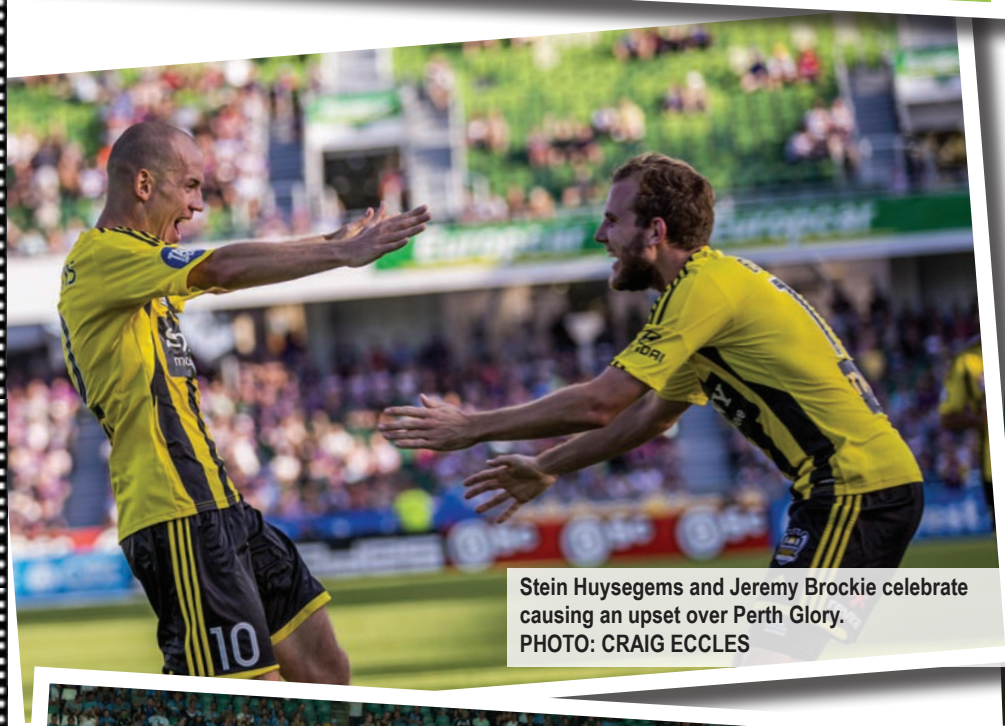
Les Shorrock's Action Packed Picture Page

This Adelaide Utd fan knows how to catch up on all the latest football news. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

The women in red gives her pom-poms a whirl at the Adelaide United and Newcastle Jets match. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

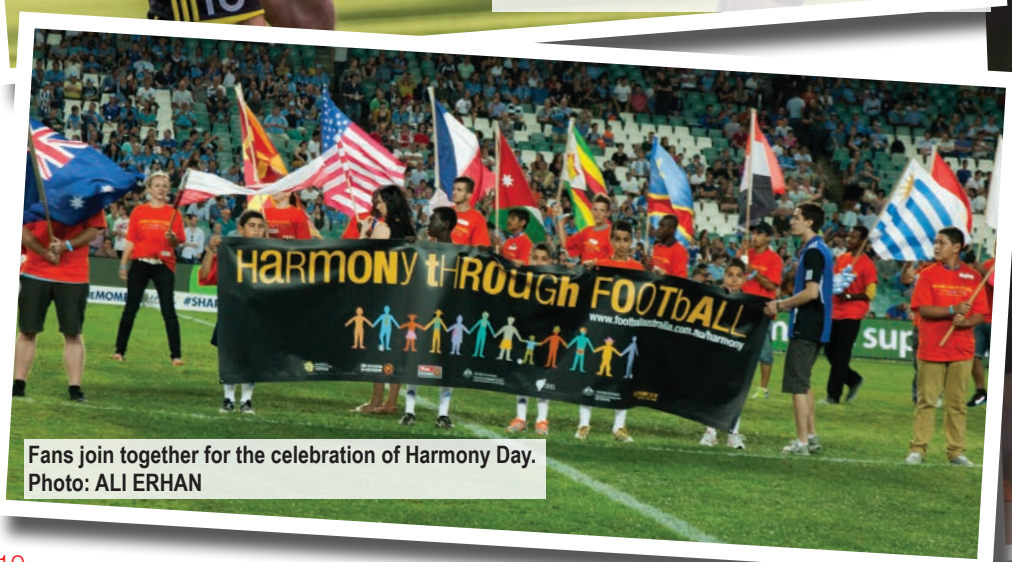
Sydney FC players are all pumped up after Yairo Yau's late equaliser. PHOTO: GREG SEATON

Wanderers fans get a taste of Melbourne weather at AAMI Park. Photo: ANITA MILAS



Stein Huysegems and Jeremy Brockie celebrate causing an upset over Perth Glory. PHOTO: CRAIG ECCLES

The Harmony Day celebrations at the Big Blue derby. Photo: ALI ERHAN



Fans join together for the celebration of Harmony Day. Photo: ALI ERHAN

This young fan has the best of football worlds in his hand. Photo: ALI ERHAN

Due to Good Friday, next week's edition of Goal! Weekly will be available from newsagents on Saturday.

Goal! Weekly would like to wish you all a Safe and Happy Easter.

goal! Weekly

Melbourne Victory v Perth Glory

Sat Mar 23 AAMI Park 5:30pm

Victory Line Up

1. Tando Velaphi (GK)
6. Leigh Broxham
8. Jonathan Bru
9. Marcos Flores
13. Diogo Ferreira
14. Billy Celeski
16. Theo Markelis
17. Jimmy Jeggo
18. Francesco Stella
21. Spase Dilevski
22. Jesse Makarounas
23. Adrian Leijer
26. Andrew Nabbout
27. Christopher Cristaldo
31. Scott Galloway
32. Connor Pain
33. Daniel Mullen
34. Dylan Murnane
39. Nathan Coe (GK)
(Four to be omitted)

Ins: Marcos Flores (returns from injury), Adrian Leijer (returns from suspension), Christopher Cristaldo, Theo Markelis (both promoted)

Outs: Archie Thompson, Mark Milligan, Marco Rojas (all on international duty)

Unavailable: Gui Finkler (knee) Nick Ansell (groin), Adama Traore (ankle)

By Andrew Bishara

"Our best form of defence is attack, and we'll be going over there to try to get the three points"

That was Interim Perth Glory coach Alistair Edwards after his side's surprise loss to the Wellington Phoenix. The match is he referring to, is Perth's trip to Melbourne to face the Victory.

The 2-1 defeat has left Perth in eighth position; sit three points adrift of sixth-placed Newcastle and fifth-placed Sydney, both on 31 points. And with only two rounds remaining, drawing won't be enough for the Glory to make the finals.

Edwards and his team need to win their last two games if they have any chance of making the finals. More importantly, they need results to fall their way. With Brisbane Roar taking on Melbourne Heart in a finals-six-pointer; Sydney taking on the Wanderers in the derby and Newcastle having already played their game, a win for Perth and by the end of the weekend, they could be fifth.

For the Victory, it's all about getting a good run to the finals. Any chance of finishing in the top two is all but over, following their 1-1 draw with Sydney.

They are guaranteed a home final, (with the latest report indicating it will be scheduled to be played on the 5th of April) but have developed a habit of throwing away leads of late. Their defence, which has been their weakness all season, needs to be tighter if they are to make a real impact for the title.

However, there's always that one team in the league that loses all its key players to injury. And that's the Victory.

Adama Traore is out for the season, so too is defender Nick Ansell, and Brazilian playmaker Gus Finkler. Archie Thompson was injured for a large part there; as is Argentine Marcos Flores has been injured and Ange Postecoglou isn't sure when he will return to the line-up.

Over the weekend against Sydney, Postecoglou set an A-League record by naming its 32nd player of the season with youngster Dylan Murnane, making his debut.

The high turnover rate shows out much injury has plagued the side, but also highlights Postecoglou's strength in giving youth a chance, as well as maintaining a title challenge.

Postecoglou can't do anything about the international schedule with Both teams set to suffer. The Glory will be missing star striker Shane Smeltz (New Zealand) and defender Michael Thwaite (Australia). While the Victory will be missing their Socceroos duo of Archie Thompson and Mark Milligan, with Marco Rojas (New Zealand) also away.

With Perth needing to win and the Victory missing almost half their first team thanks to injuries, international duties, expect a surprise to be on the cards. Melbourne haven't been at the best recently, and with their final place all sewn up, Postecoglou will be just hoping the rest of the squad stay healthy, until the real action begins. The Glory has to win, no ifs or buts. A potential shock to happen at AAMI Park.

Kiss of Death
Victory 1-2 Glory

Join the conversation on Twitter using the hash-tag #MVvPG

ABC Radio Coverage: 774 ABC Melbourne, Local Radio Victoria, 720 ABC Perth, Local radio WA Grandstand Digital Melbourne & Perth, online

Perth seeking Glory in Melbourne

Head-to-Head
Played 23
Victory FC 9
Perth Glory 9
Drawn 5

The Odds
Victory 2.00
Draw 3.50
Glory 3.60

Referee: Peter O'Leary

As A Matter Of Fact

- A disastrous own goal from Scott Jamieson was all that separated these teams when they last met in Victory's 1-0 win mid-January
- Melbourne Victory are poised to defeat Perth Glory for the third time in succession for the first time in the history of this clash
- Shane Smeltz (7) is the only current Perth Glory player to have scored more than one goal in previous iterations of this fixture for the Glory
- Perth Glory will be looking to win consecutive away games for the first time since 15th January 2012 when they travel to AAMI Park
- Danny Vukovic is poised to play his 178th game in the Hyundai A-League, becoming the joint highest capped Goal Keeper (with Clint Bolton) in the competition's history

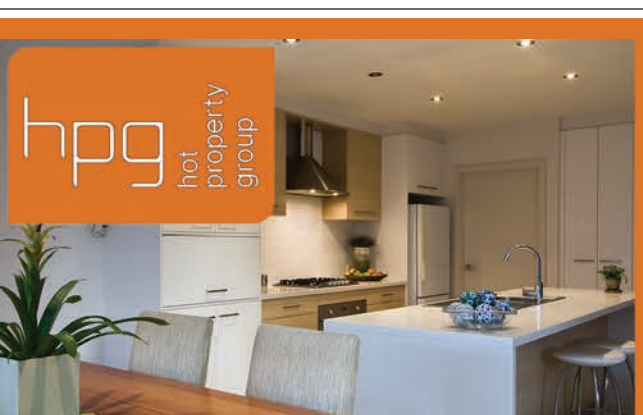
Glory Line Up

1.Danny Vukovic (gk)
2.Jack Clisby
5.Steve Pantelidis
6.Nick Ward
8.Dean Heffernan
10.Liam Miller
11.Adrian Zahra
12.Ryo Nagai
13.Travis Dodd
14.Steven McGarry
15.Brandon O'Neill
16.Evan Berger
17.Chris Harold
18.Matias Cordoba
19.Josh Risdon
21.Scott Jamison
22.Ndumba Makeche
24.Storm Roux
26.Riley Woodcock
27.Matthew Davies
28.Daniel De Silva
30 Lewis Italiano (gk)
(Seven to be omitted)

Ins: 5.Steve Pantelidis (returns from injury), 8.Dean Heffernan, 11.Adrian Zahra, 15.Brandon O'Neill, 16.Evan Berger, 22.Ndumba Makeche, 24.Storm Roux, 26.Riley Woodcock, 27.Matthew Davies (all promoted)

Outs: 7.Jacob Burns (suspended – 1 game), 9.Shane Smeltz (international duty – New Zealand), 23.Michael Thwaite (international duty –Socceroos

Unavailable: 7.Jacob Burns (suspended – 1 game), 9.Shane Smeltz (international duty – New Zealand), 23.Michael Thwaite (International duty –Socceroos)



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West Sydney Wanderers v Sydney FC

Sat Mar 23 Parramatta Stdm 7:45pm

Wanderers Line Up

1. Ante Covic (GK)
2. Shannon Cole
3. Adam D'Apuzzo
4. Nikolai Topor-Stanley
5. Michael Beauchamp
7. Labinot Haliti
8. Mateo Poljak
9. Dino Kresinger
11. Tarek Elrich
13. Joey Gibbs
14. Kwabena Appiah-Kubi
15. Reece Caira
16. Rocky Visconte
18. Iacopo La Rocca
19.Mark Bridge
20. Jerrad Tyson (GK)
21. Shinji Ono
23. Jason Trifiro
25. Josh Barresi.
(Five to be omitted)

Ins: 11. Tarek Elrich, 13. Joey Gibbs, 14. Kwabena Appiah-Kubi, 15. Reece Caira, 16. Rocky Visconte, 25. Josh Barresi (all promoted)

Outs: 6. Jerome Polenz, 10. Aaron Mooy (both injured), 17. Youssouf Hersi (suspended – 1 match)

Unavailable: 12. Tahj Minniecon (foot season)

By FFA

Derby matches are always special but the third instalment of the all-Sydney clash is huge for a host of different reasons.

While local bragging rights are at stake, Western Sydney could wrap up the Premiers' Plate with a victory while Sydney FC are still scrounging around for points to secure their place in the top six.

The Wanderers may head into the clash on the back of a 10-game winning streak, but they do have a few problems in personnel. Defender Jerome Polenz (quad) and midfielder Aaron Mooy (knee) are both likely to miss out through injury, while lucky charm Youssouf Hersi is suspended. Marquee man Shinji Ono is also battling a hamstring complaint but is hopeful of playing.

The Sky Blues, who played out an entertaining 1-1 draw with Melbourne Victory last weekend, remain in fifth spot and could secure their finals berth with a win here.

Frank Farina has no new injury concerns, with his only major decision whether to bring Lucas Neill (calf) back into the side or stick with Adam Griffiths and Tiago Calvano in defence. Skipper Terry McFlynn should also be available again after missing the Victory clash.

The Big Issue

Wanderers: Tony Popovic's sided haven't been affected by injury and suspension too much this season but could have very much a new-look side for this one.

With Polenz, Mooy (injured) and Hersi (suspended) all out and with doubts over Shinji Ono (hamstring), the Wanderers could have as many as four first choice players watching from the stands.

While every player called upon this season has done the job, you want your stars on the field in the big end-of-season games and just how much it affects the side's winning runs remains to be seen.

Sydney: The Sky Blues have had an up-and-down season but have kept themselves in the finals race due to their brilliant home form over the last three months.

Unfortunately for Sydney there last two games are on the road and they will need to find a way to eke out a victory if they are to make the top six. Two points from their last seven games on the road tells the story.

The parochial and hostile environment at Wanderland, won't make their task any easier but they have at least won at this venue already this season.

The Gamebreaker

Labinot Haliti: A month ago Haliti was considered a fill-in or bit-part player at the Wanderers but now he looms as the key man in their quest for a debut championship.

The 28-year-old has scored three goals in the last three games including a double in the record–breaking win over Melbourne Heart last weekend. Haliti offers a different threat to Dino Kresinger and his extra pace and movement could pose a problem for the Sydney back four.

As A Matter Of Fact

- The Sydney Derby will take place for the first time in 2013 after Western Sydney Wanderers scored either side of the interval to cement a 2-0 victory mid December last year
- Western Sydney have outshot the Sky Blues 36-17 in their last two clashes
- Sydney FC are poised for an 8th consecutive winless game away from home, setting an unwanted club record

Kiss of Death
WSW 2-2 SFC

Sydney FC Line Up

1. Ivan Necevski (gk)
2. Sebastian Ryall
3. Fabio
7. Brett Emerton
8. Adam Griffiths
10. Alessandro Del Piero
12. Blake Powell
13. Tiago Calvano
16. Joel Chianese
17. Terry Antonis
20. Vedran Janjetovic (gk)
21. Yairo Yau
22. Ali Abbas
23. Rhyan Grant
26. Peter Triantis
29. Joel Griffiths
32. Lucas Neill
(Two to be omitted)

Ins: Lucas Neill (returns from injury), Fabio (promoted)

Outs: Nil

Unavailable: Terry McFlynn (hamstring, 1 week), Pascal Bosschaart (heel, season), Kruno Lovrek (knee, 1 week)

Brisbane Roar v Melbourne Heart

Sun Mar 24 Suncorp Stadium 5:00pm

Roar Line Up

1. Michael Theo (gk)
3. Shane Stefanutto,
4. Matt Jurman
5. Ivan Franjic
7. Besart Berisha
8. Massimo Murdocca
9. Stef Nijland
10. Henrique
11. Ben Halloran
14. Steven Lustica
15. James Donachie
17. Mitch Nichols
18. Luke Brattan
19. Jack Hingert
20. Matt Acton (gk)
22. Thomas Broich (c)
25. George Lambadaridis
26. Corey Brown
(three to be omitted)

Ins: 4. Matt Jurman (promoted), 10. Henrique (returns from injury), 25. George Lambadaridis (promoted), 26. Corey Brown (promoted)

Outs: 13. Jade North (International duty - Socceroos)

Unavailable: 2. Matt Smith (hip – season)

By Jarrod Ellis

The penultimate round of the 2012/13 A-League season has arrived and everything, the Premier's Plate, the top-six and the wooden spoon are all still to be decided.

For Brisbane Roar and Melbourne Hear fans it's that final make-up of the top-six that will be foremost in their minds when their teams meet this Sunday afternoon.

Despite suffering disappointing seasons both teams remain in contention for a coveted finals spot and a shot at the A-League Championship crown.

Brisbane currently sits in seventh spot on the ladder, two points behind fifth-placed Sydney FC and sixth-placed Newcastle Jets.

Despite being two points out of the finals places the Roar have every reason to be optimistic of their chances. The Jets have played one extra match and are not in action this weekend, whilst Sydney must travel to the home of likely Premiers, West Sydney Wanderers, a daunting assignment for any team.

The Heart also still have reason to hope for a finals place, sitting a further two points behind Brisbane but with only a maximum of six points available for the remainder of the season there is no room for error, they must win on Sunday.

Melbourne has been wildly inconsistent this term, playing well at home whilst struggling away. If Heart are to come away from Brisbane with the three-points it will mark the first time this season that the club have won outside of Melbourne and only the second time they've secured competition points.

To say it will be an uphill task for Heart is stating the obvious. That task was only made all the harder for them when Simon Colosimo was dismissed last weekend in the match against Wanderers. Without Colosimo's experience in defence Heart will need to be extra wary of Brisbane's attacking threat.

However it's not all bad news for Melbourne's red half. The club has an envious record against Brisbane, winning their last five encounters and that should give the squad considerable confidence that they can get the job done.

Brisbane have their own problems in defence, already missing captain Matt Smith the home team will also be absent Jade North on Sunday.

North was called up to the Socceroos camp and his absence means Mike Mulvey will need to reshuffle his defence. The most likely scenario sees Ivan Franjic moved back into the centre to partner James Donachie but there has been suggestions that the absence of both Smith and North could see the return of the out of favour Matthew Jurman.

Jurman endured an error-ridden spell in the centre of defence earlier in the season and it would be somewhat of a surprise should Mulvey choose to start him in what is so far the most important game of the season for Brisbane.

The Roar hasn't come close to hitting the heights of the past two season but they have shown that they can still turn it on when motivated. With a finals place on the line if the Roar can't get up for this one then they shouldn't bother turning up.

As A Matter Of Fact

- When these teams last met the Melbourne Heart held on for a 3-2 victory despite a late double to Besart Berisha threatening an unlikely comeback from the Roar
- Melbourne Heart are poised to defeat the Brisbane Roar for a third straight time, the first time the Heart have had the opportunity to do so against any club in their short history
- Brisbane Roar have outscored the Heart 6-3 in their three clashes at Suncorp Stadium
- Nick Kalmar is poised to make his 50th Hyundai A-League appearance

Kiss of Death
Roar 3-2 Heart

Heart Line Up

1. Clint Bolton
3. Cameron Edwards
8. Matt Thompson
9. Dylan Macallister
10. Josip Tadic
11. Richard Garcia
14. Golgol Mebrathu
15. David Williams
16. Marcel Meeuwis
17. Jason Hoffman
18. David Vrankovic
19. Ben Garuccio
20. Andrew Redmayne
21. Jamie Coyne
22. Nick Kalmar
24. Sam Mitchinson
25. Jeremy Walker
36. Eli Babalj
(Three to be omitted)

Ins: 3. Cameron Edwards, 9. Dylan Macallister, 17. Jason Hoffman, 19. Ben Garuccio, 36. Eli Babalj

Outs: 4. Simon Colosimo (one week – suspended), 5. Fred (injury - undisclosed), 6. Patrick Gerhardt (international duty), 13. Germano (injury - undisclosed)

Unavailable: 23. Mate Dugandzic (broken foot – season)

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Adelaide United v CC Mariners

Sun Mar 24 Hindmarsh Stdm 7:00pm

Adelaide Utd Line Up

3.Nigel Boogaard
4.Jon McKain
5.Iain Fyfe
6.Cassio (c)
10.Dario Vidosic
11.Bruce Djite
14.Cameron Watson
16.Daniel Bowles
17.Iain Ramsay
18.Fabian Barbiero
19.Jake Barker-Daish
20.Paul Izzo (gk)
21.Jeronimo Neumann
22.Fabio Ferreira
23.Evan Kostpoulos
25.Tomi Juric
30.John Hall (gk)

(Two to be omitted)

Ins: Bruce Djite, Daniel Bowles, Evan Kostopoulos, John Hall (gk) (all promoted)

Outs: Eugene Galekovic (gk) (International duty - Socceroos), Marcelo Carrusca (groin – 1 week)

Unavailable: Osama Malik (ankle – 1-2 weeks)

By Matt Mays

With Finals football fast approaching, Adelaide United vs. Central Coast will be merely a dress rehearsal as to what we A-League fans can expect over the next few weeks.

By the time the Mariners touchdown in Adelaide on Sunday, their fight for top spot could have already been decided as Western Sydney need a win at home to Newcastle to claim their first title in as many attempts, but the Mariners have their eyes on the big prize, as do Adelaide.

As far as points go, Adelaide will be looking to keep the pressure on Victory as they enter the final round of the season. The Reds will want to make life as easy for themselves as possible for their home final on April 7th, and finishing 3rd could decide whether they are facing Sydney, Newcastle or Brisbane.

The Mariners however will be playing for pride, and after a recent dip in form in both domestic and Asian Champions League, Graham Arnold and his men will want to put all that behind them.

The Reds will have to manage without their star men for this one, with both Vidosic and Galekovic all serving international duty in the same week. Paul Izzo is putting on his gloves again and has stated this week he is eager but nervous for the challenge.

"I'm very nervous but very excited at the same time. This chance doesn't come along very often so I will have to grab it by both hands."

Currusca also has to miss out after picking up a groin injury against the Newcastle Jets last Friday night, which leaves the door open for someone to prove their worth at the business end of the season. Another doubt for the tie is Osama Malik who has an ankle problem, but the club are confident they can get him ready for the finals.

The Mariners too are having top suffer from the international impact this week. Keeper Matt Ryan will be joining the likes of Galekovic and Schwarzer at the Socceroo camp, while midfielder Michael McGlinchey is preparing himself in New Zealand for his game against New Caledonia.

The Reds will have to try their best to keep the in-form Bernie Ibini away from danger, although they may afford to relax if they were to concede a penalty, as the Mariners have failed to score in any of their last five spot kicks in all competitions!

In the build up to Sunday's big match, the crowd are in for a treat as Hindmarsh will be hosting its second annual WAGS vs. Celebrities match fundraiser for the Make a Wish Foundation.

This game will be a tricky one to call as both sides seem to be in inconsistent form at the moment, fans will not know what team's will turn up. The game will surely be littered with goals as both sides are missing their respected first team keepers.

As A Matter Of Fact

- A second half onslaught, including a double to Mitchell Duke, swept aside the Reds in a 3-1 victory for the Mariners when these teams last clashed
- Central Coast Mariners are poised to defeat the Reds for the 8th time in succession, extending the second longest winning streak against a single club in Hyundai A-League history
- Adelaide United have not tasted victory against the Mariners in 1,284 days

Kiss of Death
AUFC 2-2 Mariners

Mariners Line Up

Daniel McBreen
3. Joshua Rose
4. Pedj Bojic
5. Zachary Anderson
6. Patrick Zwaanswijk
7. John Hutchinson (c)
8. Adriano Pellegrino
9. Bernie Ibini
11. Oliver Bozanic
13. Brent Griffiths
15. Brad McDonald
16. Trent Sainsbury
17. Anthony Caceres
18. Nick Montgomery
19. Mitchell Duke
20. Justin Pasfield (Gk)
21. Mile Sterjovski
29. Nick Fitzgerald
30. David Bradasevic (Gk)
(Four to be omitted)

Ins: 4. Pedj Bojic, 8. Adriano Pellegrino, 15. Brad McDonald, 17. Anthony Caceres, 21. Mile Sterjovski, 30. David Bradasevic (Gk) (all promoted)

Outs: 1. Mathew Ryan (Gk) (international duty –Socceroos), 14. Michael McGlinchey (international duty – New Zealand)

Unavailable: 23. Adam Kwasnik (knee – season)

Ange to face Sir Alex Ferguson again

A-League Rewind

By Robert Di Fabio

Four-time national championship winning coach Ange Postecolgou was announced as the inaugural A-League All Stars coach on Monday. In what is anticipated to be a monumental occasion, the A-League representative team will lock horns with English powerhouse Manchester United at Sydney's ANZ Stadium on July 20.

After 15,000 votes were registered by the game's fans, Postecoglou narrowly won the race to head the coaching ranks. The Victory boss captured 36.8% of votes, narrowly edging out Western Sydney's Tony Popovic on 36.2%, while Central Coast Mariners boss Graham Arnold came in third place at 15.4% of the votes.

Verified by the governing body's innovative selection criteria, Football Federation Australia CEO David Gallop is putting his words into practice, committing to his motto of fan engagement and listening to the game's supporters. Fans will play an imperative role in picking the A-League All Stars, with voting opening this week, and running through until April 30.

When the fan voting culminates, the A-League All Stars team will be selected as follows: 50% fan vote, 20% expert panel vote, 20% player vote via the PFA Team of the Year system.

The final 10% will be in the hands of Postecoglou, who will have full authority over the final three players selected, to make up the 18-man squad.

"This is a chance to showcase the A-League to the world, taking on one of the biggest clubs in world football," FFA CEO David Gallop said.

"This is not just a one-off match, it's the creation of an annual event that celebrates the most popular players and coaches in the Hyundai A-League.

"Even more importantly A-League fans have the opportunity to make their mark on the selection of the team via the All Stars website.

"The Foxtel A-League All Stars is unique in the Australian sporting calendar and will play at a time when the vast majority of our 1.7 million grassroots participants are active. With a packed winter sports schedule this match gives our huge grassroots base the chance to celebrate what has been an incredible Hyundai A-League season eight and prepare for what is set to be an even bigger season nine."

After leading Brisbane Roar to back-to-back championships – going on a breathtaking 36-game unbeaten run, breaking the Australian sporting record in the process – and reviving Melbourne Victory towards the top of the competition's mantra, there's little surprise to see Postecoglou given the opportunity to lead the A-League All Stars in their first-ever appearance.

Some were disappointed not to see the Wanderers' Popovic at the helm of the All Stars, given his side's extraordinary rise to fame this season. The new boys are on the brink of winning the Premiers Plate in the club's maiden campaign.

A win over cross-town rival Sydney FC on Saturday night will see the expansion outfit win its first piece of silverware. It would be a remarkable accomplishment, particularly when the club was only brought into existence just months prior to this current campaign.

While Popovic may feel a little aggrieved to come so close, it's no shame losing out to a coach of such great expertise, experience and prowess. Postecoglou's impact on Australian football – in both the NSL and A-League era – is a clear illustration of the talent at his disposal.

For the 47-year-old tactician, it's an opportunity for redemption. In 2000, he led erstwhile NSL giants South Melbourne into the inaugural Club World Cup, where his side was ultimately defeated 2-0 by the Red Devils.

"It's an honour to be voted in by the fans and a thrill to be the coach for the first All Stars game," Postecoglou said.

"It's a concept that is sure to grow legs and become a mainstay in our football calendar. I think there will be massive interest in this game. After a couple of months without Hyundai A-League football fans can start to get withdrawal symptoms, it's a great way to cut short the wait for football fans.

"After three seasons coaching in the Hyundai A-League I think people know the type of football I want to play and I'm looking forward to putting together a team with the fans that can do that."

The All Stars concept is a tremendous initiative by FFA, one which will see the event hosted on a yearly basis. Taking a lead from our American neighbours, the All Stars fixture will allow the competition to showcase its talents on the world stage – an advertisement which further illustrates the growing maturity of our domestic football, and the game's reach around the globe.

While scheduling is a hard task to master, the only downside for this grand event will be the absence of A-League based Socceroos players, who will be on national duty at the East Asian Cup finals – contended by Australia, Japan, South Korea and China.

Despite this, the A-League All Stars model will be a great success. Each year, FFA will attempt persuade big club's to venture down under for this annual event.

Given the numerous parallels between the A-League and MLS, it would be great to see a regular All Stars match-up between these two competitions – possibly sharing the event every two years. Scheduling may be an issue, given the different month-allocations for their respective seasons, but it will be one which will draw much fan-fare, and of course, draw to the conclusion of which league is the superior. Make is happen FFA.

Follow Robert on Twitter @ RobertDiFabio

Hyundai Goal for Grassroots

Congratulations to North Sydney United FC for being selected as the Hyundai Goals For Grassroots junior club for Round 25. By virtue of Sydney FC scoring one goal this round, the club received a $2000 grant courtesy of Hyundai.

To nominate your club visit www.goalsforgrassroots.com.au

South Melbourne v Manchester United at the World Club Championship in Brazil in 2000.

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PUMPED UP AND FULL OF RUNNING
VICTORY THE BRAVE

BLUE, WHITE AND SILVER FLYING
STRIKE LIKE A FLASH OF LIGHTNING
REVVED UP AND FULL OF FIGHTING
VICTORY THE BRAVE

AND IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE
STAND UP AND SHOW NO FEAR
PROUD AND COURAGEOUS
MARCHING ON TO VICTORY

OH MELBOURNE, HEAR THE SOUND OF DRUMMING
MUST BE THE VICTORY COMING
PUMPED UP AND FULL OF RUNNING
VICTORY THE BRAVE

PHOTO & GRAPHICS: ANITA MILAS

FFV STATE KNOCKOUT CUPS DRAW

The Football Federation Victoria State Knockout Cups continue this weekend with both men's and women's competitions entering Round Three.

The men's competition has 32 sides remaining who are all looking to hit top form with league seasons beginning in April.

One standout fixture is an all State League One clash between two western suburb rivals Sunshine George Cross and St Albans Saints at Chaplin Reserve.

Out in the regional areas, Ballarat Red Devils host fellow State League Two North-West side Keilor Park at Trekardo Park and nearby the Sebastopol Vikings host Western Eagles.

Round Four will see the 16 seeded teams enter the competition.

The women's competition has 16 teams remaining with most of the Women's Premier League sides avoiding draws against fellow top tier sides.

In the single all-WPL clash, Ashburton host newly promoted Altona City, meanwhile, the other seven clubs play against lower division sides.

Defending champions Box Hill United will look to continue their impressive early season form when they face Western Eagles. In the previous round the WPL powerhouse progressed after a 24-0 thrashing against Melton Phoenix.

The draw for both competitions will be conducted on Wednesday 10 April with games to be played on the weekend of 4-5 May.

Men's State Knockout Cup Round 3 Fixtures

Heidelberg Stars v Preston Lions
B.T. Connor Reserve
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Sunshine George Cross v St Albans Saints
Chaplin Reserve
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Brunswick City v Cobram Victory
Dunstan Reserve
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Hoppers Crossing v Balmoral
Grange Reserve
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Monbulk Rangers v Old Carey
Monbulk Recreation Reserve
8:30pm Friday 22 March

FC Clifton Hill v Croydon City Arrows
Quarries Park
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Sebastopol Vikings v Western Eagles
St Georges Reserve
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Old Melburnians v Melbourne University
State Football Centre
4:30pm Saturday 23 March

Box Hill United v Malvern City
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Moreland City v Mill Park
Findon Reserve
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Sunbury United v La Trobe University
Langama Park
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Brighton v Springvale White Eagles
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Elwood City v South Yarra
Elwood Park
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

St Kilda v Mornington
Dallas Brooks Park
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Ballarat Red Devils v Keilor Park
Trekardo Park
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Kingston City v Mazenod United
The Grange Reserve
3:00pm Saturday 23 March

Women's State Knockout Cup Round 3 Fixtures

Preston Lions v Monbulk Rangers
B.T. Connor Reserve
12:00pm Sunday 24 March

Casey Comets v Melbourne University
Comets Stadium
1:00pm Sunday 24 March

Croydon City v Sandringham
Dorset Recreation Reserve
3:00pm Sunday 24 March

Ashburton Womens v Altona City
Kim Reserve
1:00pm Sunday 24 March

Heidelberg United v Ballarat Red Devils
Olympic Village
1:00pm Sunday 24 March

Western Eagles v Box Hill United
Polish Sports & Recreation Complex
1:00pm Sunday 24 March

Whitehorse United v Bulleen Lions
Veneto Club
5:30 Sunday 24 March

Boroondara Eagles v South Melbourne Womens
Knox Regional Football Centre
6:15pm Sunday 24 March

FFA Celebrates Harmony Day

Football Federation Australia (FFA) has today called on all members of the football family to proudly celebrate Harmony Day, the national celebration of cultural diversity on 21 March each year.

The day also marks the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

"Football represents Australia's multicultural diversity like no other sport and the game provides a sense of belonging all cultures, languages and ethnicities," said FFA CEO David Gallop.

Last month FFA launched Harmony through Football with a program that will take in 150 events across NSW and Victoria including over 17,000 participants from a richly diverse cultural background.

For information on the Harmony through Football program visit www.footballaustralia.com.au/harmony

Harmony through Football is the Hyundai A-League and Westfield W-League's multicultural awareness and community engagement program to link A-League and W-League Club role models with multicultural communities through a calendar of events.

The program is linked to an SBS schools program launched last week called 'The Harmony Game'(http://www.sbs.com.au/shows/harmony/)

The Hyundai A-League is the most diverse major sporting code in Australia with players from 57 countries across all continents and 87% of players having overseas ancestry.

"One of FFA's key priorities is to convert the natural interest of our multicultural communities into new participants and fans," said David Gallop.

"Our new Harmony through Football program in partnership with the Federal Government and SBS, celebrates the cultural diversity of football and is our formal engagement vehicle linking elite club role models with the communities."

So far three major Harmony themed matches have taken place in the program including Melbourne Victory's sold-out 'U-Nite' match on Australia Day and two matches on 16 March between Melbourne Heart and Western Sydney Wanderers, and Sydney FC and Melbourne Victory.

These theme games featured a mix of fantastic celebrations of diversity including a Football United Flag march and precinct activity featuring Chinese Lion Dancers, Samba Band Rhythm Brazil, performance by African Drumming troupe the Coffee Coloured Characters, Bhangra DJ, a Balkan band, the Swaziland's Possible Dreams Choir and a Citizenship Ceremony for 55 new Australians.

This weekend Western Sydney Wanderers FC will celebrate the area's rich cultural diversity in their Harmony Game in front of a sold out crowd on Saturday March 23 when they take on arch rivals Sydney FC at Parramatta Stadium.

Western Sydney Wanderers' Harmony Game will feature Harmony Day crowd giveaways, Wanderers player messages on the big screen in different languages, Multicultural player mascots, a Harmony Game Song, a volunteer flag march reflecting the rich and diverse multicultural communities of Sydney and precinct activity including African drummers who will be joined by the drumming squad from the RBB fan group.

Harmony through Football is part of Football Federation Australia's Harmony through Football Program proudly supported by the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, SBS, Department of Immigration and Citizenship and Red Elephant Projects.

Stevo's Corner

By Steve Scott

With just two rounds left in the regular season of the A-League, the burning question is which two teams are going to claim the final two top six spots on the A-League table?

With the top four sports on the table already secured, with the final order still yet to be finalised, it's a five team race to see which two teams can secure fifth and sixth spots on the table.

Last weekend's results really didn't give A-League fans any real clues as to who those two teams will be. With the finishing line in sight, the contenders all seems to be stumbling and falling over on their way to getting to that line. No team seems to want to grab the bull by the horns and grab the opportunity awaiting them. That chance to grab a top six spot and play A-League finals.

Newcastle was the first of the five contenders to let vital points slip from their grip last Friday night. The Jets took a first half lead over Adelaide United, which they let slip away. The point they did claim could come in handy and help them secure one of the two finals spots available.

The Melbourne Heart was the next contender who let points slip away from them after they were comprehensively beaten at home by the table topping Western Sydney Wanderers on Saturday afternoon.

Saturday night saw the trend of the contenders not collecting points, with the Brisbane Roar suffering a 1-0 defeat at the hands of the Central Coast Mariners. The loss meant the Roar missed the chance to claim three valuable points and climb up to fifth spot on the table.

Sydney FC were held to a 1-1 draw at home against the Victory, in a match where they went behind early on but squandered numerous goal scoring opportunities, before finally equalising in the 85th minute to claim a point and remain in fifth spot on the table.

The Perth Glory's fight to claim a top six spot was dealt a massive blow when they suffered a 2-1 loss at home to bottom of the table Wellington Phoenix. Coming into the match, Perth would have been feeling confident of claiming three points based on their recent form. Had they done so, Perth would have drawn level on points with the current fifth and sixth placed teams, Sydney and Newcastle.

I think it's going to come down to Round 27 to decide who the last two teams will be that fill positions five and six on the table and play finals this season. Based on the fixtures to take place in the final two rounds, I think it's going to be a race between three teams to fill these final two spots. Newcastle, Sydney and Brisbane are the only three teams that can fill these final two spots in my opinion.

My prediction is for the Brisbane Roar will climb to fifth spot at the conclusion of Round 27 and Sydney will fill the sixth spot, just edging out the Newcastle Jets on goal difference.

A-League fans, strap yourselves in for the last two rounds of the regulation season and enjoy the battle for the final two spots in the top six, to see who will be the last two teams to qualify for finals football to battle it out for the right to be crowned A-League Premiers for season 2012/13.

All to play for as finals time looms large.

Boo's World

SUMMER SERIES

By Mark Boric

Goal! Weekly can confirm that the man in the blue hoodie at the Heart v Wanderers game was not the infamous Mirko Ozhulovic. When contacted, Ozhulovic revealed "I only wish it was me, that is the sickest thing I've ever seen. RBB boy went down like the Yids in The Football Factory. I can't believe Fox Sports didn't go with a slow motion replay straight away or give the guy at least two votes at the end of the match. It was epic, probably the greatest moment in A-League history so far."

The sucker punch that rocked the Herald-Sun was a little ill-timed. Not literally, it got him a beauty, but so soon after Simon Hill's impassioned plea to end the myth of football hooliganism was a little unfortunate. In all the crazy theories I've read since the incident, there was one that was overlooked. Maybe the chap in the blue hoodie was trying "self-police" having suspected the Wanderers fan was about to release a flare?

A few poor refeering displays over the round were overshadowed by the punch at AAMI Park and the excitement of the Sydney FC v Melbourne Victory (I'd call it the Big Blue but that was in the away end at Heart v Wanderers. Adelaide fans are still trying to find out what their potential late winner was disallowed for. Mind you, they are also still wondering how to play these new fangled DVD's on their VCR's.

It was a less than stellular effort from FC's marquee man, Alessandro Del Piero. His free-kicks were wayward, his whinging to the referee was not particularly influential and then he had a penalty saved. Hopefully Frank Farina made all the substitutions he wanted him to.

Please Explain: Adelaide United coach Mike Valkanis attempts to get an answer from the referees for the disallowed goal. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

Graham Arnold has declared he may have to field a youth team in either an A-League finals game or an Asian Champions League tie as the Central Coast Mariners face fixture congestion. Would having weekends free for international dates space the season enough to avoid the A-League finals clashing with the AFC Champions League group stage?

The NSW National Premier League kicked-off on the weekend, and it is good to see the governing body putting out matchday programmes for all the clubs and games. They can be viewed at: http://www.footballnsw.com.au/index.php?id=298

The Victorian Premier League is still a few weeks away from commencing, and with no update to the VPL website in the last month, don't hold out on the FFV providing any similar sort of service.

So Greek midfielder Giorgos Katidis has been banned from national team representation after performing a Nazi salute after scoring a winner for AEK against Veria. The real crime are his excuses for the action, not lnowing the meaning of the gesture and pointing to a team-mate. He may as well have claimed it was due to the dog eating his homework. He'll look a real idiot when they uncover his username on the Stormfront Forums.

AGAINST ALL ODDS

A-League Champion 2012/13

West Sydney Wanderers	2.60
Central Coast Mariners	3.10
Melbourne Victory	5.00
Sydney FC	11.00
Adelaide United	12.00
Brisbane Roar	15.00
Perth Glory	23.00
Newcastle Jets	41.00
Melbourne Heart	81.00
Wellington Pheonix	N/A

Joe Carlucci

Sydney Olympic, Bonnyrigg White Eagles, Blacktown City FC and Sydney United 58 FC all lived up to their 'pre-season favourites' tag with wins in the opening round of the IGA NSW National Premier Leagues Mens 1 competition.
The new boys from the Central Coast showed they are not going to be pushovers as both Rockdale City Suns and APIA-Leichhardt Tigers stumbled at home in opening round action.

South Coast Wolves 0 Sutherland Sharks 4

A tremendous Panni Nikas hat-trick setup a fine Sutherland Sharks win in Wollongong on Saturday evening.
Nikas' three strikes carved the way to a 4-0 triumph on the road, the Sharks sending an ominous warning to the rest of the playing field.
Nikas opened the scoring moments before the break when he latched onto Klim Gjorseski's cross from the left to slot home past Daniel Collison.
The Sharks started the second-half on the front-foot though a defensive blunder by Chris Nathaniel saw new Sharks' signing Jamie McMaster swoop on the mistake before round his marker and slam the ball home.
Another positive spell for the Wolves came undone just after the hour mark when Nikas grabbed his second for the night, making the most of a lapse in concentration by the Wolves rearguard.
The result was capped off with Nikas' third 2' minutes from the end, securing the Sharks a very impressive first-up win for the season.

Sydney Olympic 2 Central Coast Mariners Academy 1

New boys Central Coast Mariners Academy showed they were not overawed about facing one of the competition's best performing sides in recent seasons, giving a good account at Belmore Sports Ground on Saturday night, despite going down 2-1.
The Blues used their experience to seal the deal, though the Mariners certainly proved they will be a thorn in the side of many opponents in 2013.
Will Angel and Petar Markovic were both impressive early on for the Blues as the opening goal of the evening arrived on 26' minutes. Angel's headed attempt back across goal struck the arm of the Mariners' Ridge Mapu, leaving the referee with no option but to award a penalty.
Blues' captain Phil Makrys, in great form again tonight, coolly slotted home for the lead.
Makrys doubled the Blues' lead soon after, again from the penalty-spot, this time following a rash challenge on Hussein Salameh.
Former Sydney FC striker Chris Payne orchestrated Central Coast's ticket back into the match when he cut the ball back into the path of Scott Petitt to drill home.
Late drama saw both teams lose a man each – the Blues' new signing Luke Grima saw a straight red for a late tackle as Adam Biddle was given an early shower for his two yellow cards for the Mariners.

Action between the Mariners and Sydney Olympic.

Blacktown Spartans 2 Marconi Stallions 1

Reigning champions Marconi Stallions suffered somewhat of a shock first-up loss at Blacktown Spartans on Saturday evening, a welcome result for the Spartans faithful at Blacktown Football Park.
The Spartans deserved their win – a neat double by Nathan Millgate – even though they were forced to defend late on to survive a late Stallions onslaught.
Millgate's opener arrived in the 4' minute, and it was an absolute beauty. Allowed to move out of midfield, Millgate unleashed a powerful 25-yard drive into the bottom right-hand corner, much to the delight of the home supporters.
Millgate doubled his, and his side's tally, shortly after the break before a Nahuel Arrarte inspired Marconi got back into the match late on.
Steven Ilic netted the goal in the 90' minute after he was expertly sent through on goal by the Marconi captain, though it was too little too late in the end as the Spartans held out for the win.

APIA-Leichhardt Tigers 1 Bonnyrigg White Eagles 3

Bonnyrigg kick-started its campaign in the best fashion possible with a very comprehensive win at Lambert Par, against APIA-Leichhardt Tigers.
Striker Aleksander Canak scored a brace – a goal on either side of Adrian Ucchino's screaming long-range strike.
Canak opened the scoring with a well-taken header from a Mitchell Long cross in only the 2' minute, making the Tigers' task at hand a tough one.
Ucchino's 'bomb' arrived mid-way through the second-half and it was something special, leaving Tigers' goalkeeper Ryan Norval helpless in the process.
The Tigers should have re-opened the contest from the penalty-spot moments later though new signing Keith Shevlin missed his spot-kick.
Gerard Ouffoue did get the Tigers back into the match with his 81' minute goal, though Canak closed the encounter shortly after with another well-taken finish.

Rockdale City Suns 0 Blacktown City FC 2

Sean Rooney and new signing Harris Gaitatzis sealed the deal for Blacktown City at a windy Ilinden Sports Centre on Sunday. Played in some difficult conditions, two defensive errors – the second somewhat controversial – proved the difference.
Rooney made the most of some poor defending to put Blacktown City ahead before Gaitatzis somehow dispossessed Rockdale City Suns goalkeeper Diego Barcena, when he seemingly had the ball in his hands, before slotting home to put the result out of reach.
The Suns' best efforts to get back into the contest went begging late on, on a luckless afternoon for the side.

Manly United FC 0 Sydney United 58 FC 1

A very very late Luke Glavas penalty proved the difference at Cromer Park on Sunday afternoon. Both sides had chances to score goals during the match though it was the final 5' minutes that proved telling.
A rash challenge inside the penalty-area saw the referee Adam Susz award the Reds a penalty, leaving Glavas with the task of securing the three-points.
Colin Iley had a late chance at the other end to salvage a point, though in the end it would be the Reds who held on for the win.

Luca Cetta

Campbelltown retained their unbeaten start to the campaign and moved into second position on the ladder following a 1-0 victory over Adelaide City in Round 5 of the South Australian Premier League at Adelaide City Park on Saturday.
Oliver Totani netted the only goal of the game inside the opening 20 minutes, giving the Red Devils 11 points from their first five matches. They have kept three successive clean sheets.
Totani opened the scoring for Campbelltown in the 18th minute, following a cross to Calvin Mbarga. His attempted chest and finish fell kindly for the No 10, who took a touch and slotted his low drive into the back of the net.
Alex Sunasky saw a long range volley saved by Les Poglicomi, who put in another good performance.
As Adelaide City pushed in search of an equaliser they left gaps for Campbelltown to exploit. Mbarga could have done better when on the counter-attack, but he put his shot over the crossbar.
The same player then fired wide of the target, with Mullen's side unable to put the game to bed.
City threatened with Bucco and Ricardo Da Silva, but neither could get the better of Pogliacomi. His defence also stood firm with Todd McSorley crucial.
The host's high number of corners and possession came to naught, as they were frustrated time and again by a resolute Campbelltown.
Best on ground for Adelaide City were Sunasky, Matthew Halliday and Matthew Mullen. Captain Vas Parhas led by example for Campbelltown and was ably assisted by Haris Vukic and McSorley.
Elsewhere, Cumberland United are the new Premier League leaders following a comfortable 3-0 win over Enfield City at A.A Bailey Reserve on Saturday.
Robin Lippett opened the scoring before half-time, while Jonathon and Alex Rideout made sure of the points with goals late on. Cumberland lead Campbelltown on goal difference.
Captain Lippett, plus Jim Stavrides and Jonathon Rideout, were the Foxes top trio. Enfield's Ryan Flynn, Sam Lennon and Piotr Sapa played well.

Action between Cumberland and Enfield. Photo: ADAM BUTLER

Raiders completed a late comeback to earn a 3-3 draw versus Western Strikers at the Croatian Sports Centre on Saturday.
Andreas Wiens scored an early brace, but an own goal got the hosts back on track. Josh Harding restored Strikers two-goal advantage with 15 minutes remaining, yet Raiders showed their fighting spirit as Evan Metanomski and Tony Cann ensured a share of the spoils.
Cann, Shane Tobias and Mathew Gaston were Raiders best. Strikers were led by Chahine Noujaim, Wiens and Adrian D'Alfonso.
Adelaide Blue Eagles completed a miraculous comeback to defeat Adelaide Comets 4-3 at Marden Sports Complex on Saturday.
George Aslanidis' double and a goal from Elias Demourtzidis had Comets in command, despite Matthew Charalambous equalising for the hosts. As the match entered injury time Comets were 3-1 to the good. Incredibly, goals from Adam Harris, Dean Kenrick and a 96th minute Yvan Boyokino winner stunned Comets and completed the amazing fightback.
Boyokino, Joseph Power and Kenrick were Blue Eagles top players, while Theo Tsounis, Gene Day and Aslanidis performed well for the bewildered Comets.
West Torrens Birkalla cruised to a commanding 4-1 triumph over Para Hills at The Paddocks on Saturday.
Tom Briscoe was on fire, netting a hattrick to put Birkalla in a strong position. Steven Ward netted a late consolation, but there was still time for David Scalamera to add to the Birkalla total.
Matthew Marchioro, Ward and David Wadey were the Knights best on a disappointing day, while West Torrens Birkalla were led by Briscoe, John Fusco and Ryan Kitto.
MetroStars returned to the winners list with a 2-1 victory versus White City at Frank Mitchell Park on Saturday.
MetroStars were two goals to the good thanks to a strike in each half from Anthony Solagna and Joseph Polisena. Alor Bulabek pulled a goal back for the hosts in the dying moments.
Andrej Rastovac and Joe Criscitelli performed well for White City, while MetroStars top players were Andrew Ciarla, Scott Tunbridge and Solagna.
Croydon secured their second success of the campaign with a 3-1 win over Adelaide Cobras at Polonia Reserve on Saturday.
Daniel Scordo, plus further goals from Luke Klimek and Shaun McGreevy, ensured the points for the Kings, while Ali Toure scored a consolation for Cobras.
Luke Air, McGreevy and Klimek were Croydon's best, while Adelaide Cobras were led by Dion Lambrinos, Nick Crossley and Dalibor Barisic.

White City 1 *(Alor Bulabek)* **v MetroStars 2** *(Anthony Solagna, Joseph Polisena) (HT 0-1)*

Croydon 3 *(Daniel Scordo, Luke Klimek, Shaun McGreevy)* **v Adelaide Cobras 1** *(Ali Toure) (HT 2-0)*

Adelaide City 0 v Campbelltown City 1 *(Oliver Totani) (HT 0-1)*

Cumberland United 3 *(Robbie Lippett, Jonathon Rideout, Alex Rideout)* **v Enfield City 0** *(HT 1-0)*

Raiders 3 *(TOG, Tony Can, Evan Metanomski)* **v Western Strikers 3** *(Andreas Weins 2, Josh Harding) (HT 0-2)*

Adelaide Blue Eagles 4 *(Matthew Charalambous, Adam Harris, Dean Kenrick, Yvan Boyokino)* **v Adelaide Comets 3** *(George Aslanidis 2, Elias Demourtzidis) (HT 0-1)*

Para Hills Knights 1 *(Steven Ward)* **v West Torrens Birkalla 4** *(Tom Briscoe 3, David Scalamera) (HT 0-2)*

Walter Pless

Olympia Warriors win Summer Cup

Olympia Warriors picked up their first bit of silverware since 2005 last Saturday when they won the Summer Cup with a 2-1 victory in the final over Taroona at South Hobart.
But, both teams were in the final by default. Olympia had lost 3-0 to South Hobart in one semi-final, while Taroona had gone down 4-1 to Beachside in a penalty shoot-out after their semi-final had ended 2-2.
South Hobart and Beachside had both fielded ineligible players in the semi-finals and were sensationally disqualified from the final.
In the final, second-tier Taroona came to within a whisker of beating Victory League club Olympia Warriors.
Taroona put in a spirited display and could easily have won if they had known how to finish.
They put together some marvellous passages of play and refused to be overawed by their more highly fancied opponents. They created some golden chances, only to squander them with atrocious finishing.
Their goal, however, came from a marvellous piece of vision, opportunism and technical skill by youngster Eli Luttmer. With 20 minutes remaining and his side 2-0 down, the younger Luttmer, in possession in the centre-circle, looked up and, seeing Olympia goalkeeper Dmitri Nester way off his line, deliberately chipped the ball at goal from all of 50 metres. The horrified Nester realised too late what was happening and, despite desperately trying to make up ground, could only watch in embarrassment as the ball sailed over his head and bounced into the back of the net.
Luttmer's initiative and inventiveness was matched by Olympia's Emmanuel Tsakiris, who put his side in front on the stroke of half-time. Surrounded by defenders and noticing that goalkeeper John Burridge had recklessly come out of goal and committed himself, Tsakiris spun on the ball and curled a first-time effort from the right of the box and inside the far left-hand post.
Taroona were lucky in the opening minutes when a Nick Meredith corner from the left was glanced against his own crossbar by Llewyn Tubb.
After that initial scare, Taroona settled into their rhythm and had had the better of the chances as David Abbott roamed down the flanks, Sam James threatened through the middle and Toby Dove cut the Olympia defence apart with some searching balls.
A move early on involving Dove, Abbott and James ended with James unable to get in a shot but winning a corner. From the set-piece, Eli Luttmer volleyed narrowly wide.
Shortly after, Taroona survived by the skin of their teeth as Olympia pounded their goal from close range and the ball was repeatedly blocked inside the six-yard box before being cleared.
Taroona, a goal down at the start of the second period, almost equalised within seconds of the resumption when James combined with Dove, but the latter rolled his shot just wide of the right-hand post.
Olympia hit back in the 55th minute when warren Wadawu's flick put Tsakiris in possession. He turned Ben Schaap and managed a shot, but it flew high and wide.
In the 62nd minute, the excellent Lachlan Nichols, who was stamping his mark on the game in midfield, fired narrowly wide.
Taroona were not cowered, however, and James should have levelled in the 67th minute when he eluded several defenders who were pursuing him in a pack, but he shot tamely straight at the goalkeeper.
Olympia were very fortunate to score a second in the 68th minute, although the build-up to it, from deep in defence to the edge of the box and involving three or four players, we outstanding. The move finished with Hugh Undy's speculative low drive flying straight at Burridge. But, the keeper somehow let the ball squirm under his body and into the net. It was one of those moments when, if a goalkeeper could dig a hole and bury himself, Burridge would have done just that.
Within three minutes, Eli Luttmer had come up with his piece of virtuosity and made Olympia's keeper want to bury himself, but that was as close as Taroona came to drawing and taking the game into extra-time.
Olympia's success was a fitting accompaniment to the Greek Estia Festival, which was held on that weekend.

Olympia Warriors with the Tasmanian Summer Cup. Photo: WALTER PLESS

Peter Simcox

Stirling Lions began the 2013 All Flags Premier League season, with a hard fought 2-1 win against newly promoted Cockburn City at Macedonia Park last Saturday afternoon.
The home side went into the break with the lead thanks to a smart finish from Anthony Lyons, and they doubled their advantage two minutes into the second half, when former Perth Glory midfielder Scott Bulloch finished well. Cockburn substitute Nick Carroll headed home Paul Lloyd's corner midway through the second half, but Scott Miller's side were unable to find the equaliser.
Bulloch, who signed from Victorian Premier League side Bentleigh Greens, was delighted to have secured the victory in his first state league game back in Perth since 2008. "It's a good start to the season and to get on the score sheet too is pleasing," Bulloch said.
"We sat back a little bit in the second half when we went 2-0 up, and they got one back and they came back into the game, and we nearly paid for it in the end."
In other games Armadale had a stunning 5-1 win against Balcatta at Alfred Skeet Oval. New signing Colin Todd was absent due to injury, but a hat trick from Jack Salter and a brace from Raveshlan Kuppusamy gave Lee Bamber's side a perfect start.
The points were shared at Intiga Stadium, where Inglewood United and Floreat Athena fought out a 1-1 draw. Ian McMurray had given the visitors the lead on the hour before substitute Matt Danskin levelled with fifteen minutes remaining. But it was Inglewood custodian Luke Martino who was the star pulling off a string of fine saves to deny Floreat.
ECU Joondalup made the long trip to Bunbury and returned with a 2-0 win, thanks to first half goals from New Zealand striker Tanner Selyer and former Perth Glory midfielder Tommy Amphlett.
Last season's Champions Sorrento began their defence of the title with an emphatic 7-0 win against the Football West National Training Centre at Percy Doyle Reserve, with former Motherwell defender Steven McDonald scoring four.
Football West

Stirling Lions striker Anthony Lyons and Cockburn City midfielder Eamon McNelis in action

All Flags State League Premier Division Round 1: Stirling Lions Sc 2 Cockburn City Sc 1, Bunbury Forum Force 0 Ecu Joondalup Sc 2, Inglewood United Sc 1 Floreat Athena Fc 1, Sorrento Fc 7 Football West Ntc Men 0, Armadale Sc 5 Balcatta Sc 1, Perth Sc 1 Bayswater City Sc 2

Couch Potato

* ALL TIMES ARE AEDT

one

Sunday 24th March
01:30 am Liverpool TV - Southampton v Liverpool

Tuesday 26th March
09:30 am Liverpool TV

Friday 29th March
06:00 am Liverpool TV

SETANTA SPORTS

FRIDAY 22ND MARCH
World Cup Qualifier UEFA Israel v Portugal 11:35pm LIVE

SATURDAY 23RD MARCH
World Cup Qualifier UEFA Croatia v Serbia 3:50am LIVE
World Cup Qualifier UEFA Scotland v Wales 6:55am LIVE
World Cup Qualifier CONMEBOL Uruguay v Paraguay 8:55am LIVE
World Cup Qualifier UEFA San Marino v England 11:00am 1st Airing
World Cup Qualifier CONMEBOL Peru v Chile 1:05pm LIVE
World Cup Qualifier CONMEBOL Colombia v Bolivia 3:20pm 1st Airing
World Cup Qualifier UEFA Highlights Show 7:00pm 1st Airing
Scottish Division 3 Round 31 Rangers v Stirling 10:55pm LIVE

SUNDAY 24TH MARCH
Blue Square Premier Southport v Kidderminister 11:30am 1st Airing
npower League One Round 40 Sheff United v Brentford 1:20pm 1st Airing

MONDAY 25TH MARCH
npower League One Round 40 Tranmere v Stevenage 2:55am LIVE

TUESDAY 26TH MARCH
npower League One Round 40 Highlights Show 7:00pm 1st Airing

WEDNESDAY 27TH MARCH
World Cup Qualifier UEFA France v Spain 6:50am LIVE
World Cup Qualifier CONMEBOL Chile v Uruguay 10:25am LIVE
World Cup Qualifier CONMEBOL Bolivia v Argentina 12:30pm 1st Airing
World Cup Qualifier UEFA Serbia v Scotland 2:20pm 1st Airing
World Cup Qualifier CONMEBOL Venezuela v Colombia 4:10pm 1st Airing
World Cup Qualifier UEFA Highlights Show 7:00pm 1st Airing
World Cup Qualifier CONMEBOL Ecuador v Paraguay 11:40pm 1st Airing

FRIDAY 29TH MARCH
Bundesliga Round 27 Preview Show 7:00pm 1st Airing

SATURDAY 30TH MARCH
npower Championship Round 39 Crystal Palace v Birmingham 4:25am LIVE
npower Championship Round 39 Leicester v Millwall 6:40am LIVE
Scottish Division 3 Round 32 Montrose v Rangers 10:55pm LIVE

SBS

SBS ONE
Saturday March 23rd
10:45 am 2014 FIFA World Cup Qualifier: Argentina v Venezuela
Live from El Monumental Stadium, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Sunday March 24th
10:30 am Football Asia
11:00 am UEFA Champions League Magazine

Monday March 25th
4:30 pm FIFA Futbol Mundial
11:00 pm The World Game

Tuesday March 26th
8:00 pm FIFA World Cup 2014 Qualifier: Australia v Oman - From ANZ Stadium, Sydney, Australia.

Wednesday March 27th
6:45 am FIFA World Cup 2014 Qualifier: France v Spain - Live from Stade de France, Paris, France.

SBS TWO
Monday March 25th
9:30 pm The World Game

FOX SPORTS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE LIVE
Times listed are 7 minutes prior to kick-offs.

No fixtures this weekend due to World Cup qualifier San Marino v England game on Saturday 23 March.

English Premier League
Sat Mar 30 Sunderland v Manchester United
11.38 pm Fox 3
Sun Mar 31 Manchester City v Newcastle
1.53 am Fox 1
Sun Mar 31 Arsenal v Reading
1.53 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 31 Southampton v Chelsea
1.53 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 31 Swansea v Tottenham
1.53 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 31 Wigan v Norwich
1.53 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 31 West Ham v West Brom
9.00 am Fox 3 (DELAY)
Sun Mar 31 Everton v Stoke
4.23 am Fox 3
Sun Mar 31 Aston Villa v Liverpool
11.23 pm Fox 3
Tue Apr 2 Fulham v QPR
5.53 am Fox 1

Hyundai A-League
All games LIVE

Sat Mar 23 Melbourne v Perth
5.30 pm Fox 3
Sat Mar 23 Western Sydney v Sydney
7.45 pm Fox 3
Sun Mar 24 Brisbane v Melbourne Heart
5.00 pm Fox 3
Sun Mar 24 Adelaide v Central Coast
7.00 pm Fox 3

FOX SPORTS FC
Every Tuesday
8.30 pm

Round 26: ASK THE EXPERTS

THE VERDICT
Victory (5) Glory (1) Draw (1) - Wanderers (5) Sydney FC (0) Draw (3) - Roar (8) Heart (0) Draw (0) - Adelaide (2) Mariners (0) Draw (6)

SANTO CILAURO 59
Victory
WSW
Roar
Adelaide
Last week: 1

CRAIG MACKENZIE 58
Draw
Wanderers
Roar
Draw
Last week: 2

EDDIE KRNCEVIC 55
Draw
Wanderers
Roar
Draw
Last week: 2

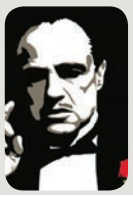
PETER KATHOLOS 54
Victory
Draw
Brisbane
Draw
Last week: 1

ROGER SLEEMAN 64
Victory
Draw
Roar
Draw
Last week: 2

ANDY HARPER 51
Victory
Draw
Roar
Adelaide
Last week: 0

JOHN DOYLE 56
Victory
Wanderers
Roar
Draw
Last week: 2

KISS OF DEATH 60
Glory
Wanderers
Roar
Draw
Last week: 2



Sharks Look To Make A Splash in VPL

NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUES
VPL COUNTDOWN

BRANDON GALGANO takes an insider's view into the lives of the Victorian Premier League clubs as they prepare for the upcoming 2013 season.

Club: Port Melbourne Sharks
VPL Titles: 0 (Minor Premiers 1995 and 2001)
Last Title: Victorian State League Division 2 (2010)
Position Last Season: 2nd Victorian State League 1 (Runner up State Knockout Cup)
Coach: Eric Vassiliadis

The 2013 Victorian Premier League season kicks-off on Friday 5 April.

Alex Khrapko does some hurdling in a match against Ranges last season. Photo: JOHN PUNSHON

It's been almost nine years since Port Melbourne SC have experienced premier league football. From VPL minor premiers in 2001 to State league 2 cellar dwellers in 2007, the clubs fall from grace has tested even the most loyal of supporters but a successful 2012 campaign which saw Port come a close second in State League 1 last season as well as narrowly losing in the State Knockout Cup Grand Final to Dandenong Thunder, the club seems to finally be returning to the glory days of the late 90s and early 2000s.

In the coaching department, former captain Eric Vassiliadis has formally retired from all playing duties to focus fully on his coaching role as well as Melbourne Victory goal keeper coach Steve Mautone signing on as the clubs new director of coaching. This added experience will surely help not only the clubs senior and under 21s sides but will also ensure that the clubs juniors will be given the chance to prosper in the hope of developing these young players into potential senior squad members in the near future.

Who's in?

Port Melbourne have signed a number of key players for the upcoming return to Premier League football. These signings include:

Kamal Ibrahim: The former Melbourne Heart man was touted as a potential star of Australian football but after being released by the club in 2011, the winger's progress has stalled of late and following a disastrous campaign with Heidelberg last season, he will be looking to bounce back in 2013.

Ros Honos: The former Oakleigh man will be looking to establish himself this season following a successful campaign with Oakleigh last year.

Graham Hockless: A key signing for this campaign. The former Richmond and Green Gully midfielder will look to pull the strings in the midfield this season and if he can regain the form which saw him win the VPL Gold Medal (Player of the season) in 2008, then Port will certainly be a dangerous force this season.

James Riccobene: The young winger had a decent campaign for Heidelberg last season and will look to further establish himself as a quality Premier League midfielder this season.

Adam Nakic: The older of the Nakic brothers, the former Melbourne Victory man is another quality signing for the club and provided he can regain his brilliant form for knights last season, he will add to an already quality stock of midfielders down at Port Melbourne this season.

Jake Nakic: The younger of the Nakic brothers, the former Victory midfielder will also look to build on a solid campaign for Knights last season.

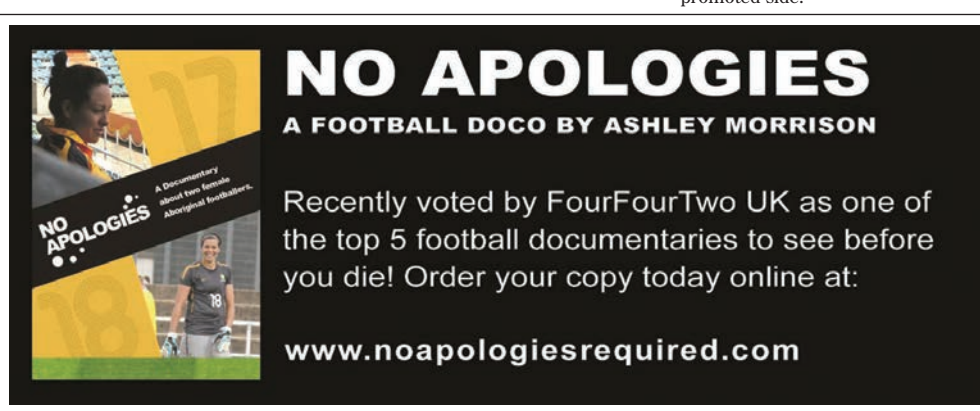
Daniel Visevic: The former Richmond and St Albans striker is yet another quality signing for the club and he will be looking to lead the line this season.

Kristian Sarkies: Undoubtedly the clubs biggest signing of the off season. Sarkies has been twice capped by the Socceroos as well as having played a key role, scoring the sixth and final goal, in the 6-0 grand final win over Adelaide United for Melbourne Victory way back in 2007. Since then though, it has been a quite remarkable fall from grace for a man who was once touted as a potential star of Australian football, Sarkies has had to endure a string of career threatening injuries over the past few years which have stalled his career and following unsuccessful stints at Melbourne Heart and Adelaide United in recent years, Sarkies decided to take 6 months off in late 2011 in order to get his body right. Now back to almost full fitness following his comeback to football last season with Heidelberg, Sarkies will look to give one last push in the hope that he can maybe return to the form which saw him train with the Socceroos during the 2006 world cup in Germany.

With these key signings as well as a coaching staff fully dedicated to the cause, Port Melbourne will certainly be a force to be reckoned with this season and if all goes to plan the club may even push for a top six finish and a place in the finals for the first time since 2001.

In Other News around the VPL....

- South Melbourne have been hit with the devastating news that fan favourite **Carl Recchia** will miss a large proportion of the season with a serious knee injury
- Former Richmond Striker **Tom Cahill** has signed with Green Gully with the Englishmen looking to provide an extra bite to an already potent Gully attack.
- Former Heidelburg and South Melbourne centre back **James Stefanou** is rumoured to have signed with Pascoe Vale. The imposing defender will add much needed experience and quality to the newly promoted side.



Can Dandenong Thunder be a force again?

MACCA AT LARGE

With Craig MacKenzie

Dandenong Thunder head coach Chris Taylor in a customary pensive mood.

TWO WEEKS out from the start of the 2013 Victorian Premier League season and the club that swept all before it last year is still reeling.

Dandenong Thunder is spent. And has little money left to spend. Club spokesman Sezar Jakupi wonders how long the Albanian-backed community-based club can keep fighting the football establishment.

Thunder was charged with misconduct after flares were set off at AAMI Park last October in the VPL Grand Final.

After going through FFV's tribunal and appeal processes Thunder took its case to FFA's Appeal Committee in Sydney which ruled that Thunder's first five competitive games this year be conducted as lock-outs; the club pay a $40,000 fine; the senior team be deducted three points before the season starts; all club members complete an FFV Respect and Responsibility Course prior to 30 June; and no club member be admitted to home games after the fifth competitive match of the season unless they produce evidence of having attended the FFV course.

The financial clout of the penalties kicks in at home games as the club estimates that this amounts to over $15,000 a game in lost revenue. Add the loss of sponsorship and membership and the club's ability to compete with big-spending rivals is greatly diminished.

But the FFA Appeal Committee ruling is a far cry from the original FFV Tribunal decision which imposed a 10 home-game lockout that would have condemned the club to certain relegation given its inability to then amass a playing budget that would enable a competitive senior squad to be assembled.

So will Thunder go to the Supreme Court to challenge the FFV and FFA judgements as it has long hinted at doing or will the need to resolve this issue and focus on the team make it begrudgingly accept its current fate?

"Obviously we are reluctant to let this matter drag on," said Jakupi. "We don't want to keep investing so much energy and resources in this matter when we are unsure of what the benefits might be.

"We are frustrated and disappointed at the whole process and the outcome and we categorically don't accept the punishment.

"At both the FFV and FFA appeal hearings we said don't lock us out. We proposed to operate a register with the name and address of every one of our supporters who attends our games but in the end I think both FFV and FFA were sceptical of our ability to do this."

The entire affair has taken its toll on both the coaching and playing staff and head coach Chris Taylor has overseen the departure of established (and well-paid) stars with goalkeeper Stuart Webster, hitman Luke Sherbon and midfielder Ross Thompson all joining rival Bentleigh Greens.

A lesser man than Taylor would have taken the easy way out and walked away from the saga that has bedevilled his pre-season preparations.

"I've probably achieved everything last year I could have achieved with Dandenong and sometimes it's better to go out when you're on top but my loyalty to the players and my emotional attachment to them is what kept me here," said Taylor.

"This whole affair has impacted on the players in a big way. They were promised the Grand Final prizemoney ($30,000) then the federation took it off us with a massive fine so the players haven't been rewarded for what they have done in good faith.

The financial clout of the penalties kicks in at home games as the club estimates that this amounts to over $15,000 a game in lost revenue. Add the loss of sponsorship and membership and the club's ability to compete with big-spending rivals is greatly diminished.

"I'm obviously saying this tongue in cheek but I wonder if it would have been better for our supporters to have damaged 200 seats instead of letting off a firework."

Despite new fiscal constraints Taylor has been able to make some important signings, none more so than striker Luke Hopper from English club Hungerford Town and former Hearts and East Fife midfielder Matthew Park, a 24-year-old ex-Frankston Pines star who had gone overseas as a teenager to pursue a professional career in Scotland.

And although Craig Elvin retired at the end of last season he's training with Thunder and Taylor remains hopeful of talking the veteran into going around once more.

Taylor also has nabbed Steve Topalovic from Richmond and young striker Zac Walker from Oakleigh via Melbourne Heart.

Griffin McMaster made little more than a cameo appearance with Thunder during pre-season training before joining former club Oakleigh Cannons and leaving Zaim Zeneli as Thunder's main custodian.

A crucial meeting involving Taylor and the club took place on Wednesday night where playing budget figures were thrashed out and some tough decisions made.

The bottom line is that the club's playing and coaching budget has been slashed by 20 per cent this year and the committee is pushing hard for more sponsorship.

Thunder continues its preparation for the looming start to the VPL season by taking on Melbourne Victory in a friendly game at George Andrews Reserve at 5pm this Sunday (24 March).

It will be a good test for Taylor's men. It also will be a good test for Thunder's supporters and if they turn out in droves their message will be a much-needed positive one for the club's beleaguered administration.

Has FFA missed the mark?

STILL on the Thunder theme there are elements of the FFA Appeal Committee rulings that are highly controversial.

The games lockout involves at least three VPL home games (Thunder also has a cup match in the first five competitive games of the season but the draw for that game is yet to take place). The worst scenario for Thunder then is that it will lose income from four home games in total.

But the fact that the club may only be locked out of three home games rather than the 10 home games in the original FFV ruling must stick in the craw of those tribunal panel members who reached a decision that, when compared with FFA's judgement, appears heavy-handed and unreasonable.

FFV had no choice but to toe the line and laud FFA's judgement but it would come as no surprise should the state body be privately cringing at the disparity in the lock-out penalties.

And what is to become of the rulings regarding Thunder members and how will these rulings be enforced?

These are questions I put to interim FFV CEO Peter Gome this week who is preparing to meet with Thunder officials to discuss these matters.

"To be honest we don't know at this stage because we wanted to wait until the appeals process reached its ultimate conclusion before meeting with the club, which we will do next week, to discuss how this process is going to work with their membership base," said Gome.

"We obviously have the course in place that we can run so we have to see who will attend and we will then know that these people have attended the course.

"A simple way might be that once they attend the course we then stamp their membership card for 2013 which is then laminated by Dandenong Thunder. That may be one way of achieving this.

"We want to work with Dandenong Thunder in order to say how do we both work out how to do this in the best possible manner for the Dandenong Thunder supporters."

But any fears that FFV might have of a pending logistical nightmare in arranging for vast numbers to attend the Respect and Responsibility Course can quickly be put to rest.

"To be honest we're going to find it hard to attract members because the membership package won't involve entry to all our home games," said Jakupi.

"That incentive has been taken away from members and we could find ourselves in a situation where we struggle to get a couple of dozen financial members.

If Jakupi is right and membership numbers are poor then the bulk of the club's large supporter base won't be bound by the restrictions imposed by the FFA judgement.

That's because the rulings specifically and unambiguously refer to members.

Don't be spooked by the noise you hear in the background. It's just a few thousand Albanians laughing loudly.

Cannon fodder for A-League

OAKLEIGH Cannons is proving to be one of Australia's most productive breeding grounds for A-League players.

In the past four seasons nine Oakleigh players have signed A-league contracts: Nick Kalmar (Melbourne Heart), Mathew Foschini (Melbourne Victory), Cameron Watson (Adelaide), Ivan Franjic (Brisbane Roar), Craig Goodwin (Newcastle Jets), Jim Downey (Wellington Phoenix), Jeremy Walker (Melbourne Heart), Sam Mitchinson (Melbourne Heart) and Lewis Italiano (Perth Glory).

Goodwin and Walker were brought to the club by 2011 VPL Coach of the Year Arthur Papas while John Anastasiadis brought Franjic, Watson and Kalmar to Jack Edwards Reserve when he coached the club in 2010.

"We're proud to have had so many young players go on to the A-League," said Oakleigh general manager Aki Ionnas.

"We talk about our club when these players first come to us and we talk about being a springboard for their careers through excellent coaching and support.

"Arthur Papas is a big role model for us. Even though he was only with us for a year he brought in a lot of changes to our club.

"What he did was amazing. The guy is on a different level and we think he'll coach the national team one day."

This will be Oakleigh's 10th consecutive season at the elite level of Victorian club football and it has made the VPL finals six times finishing runner-up in the Grand Final in 2011 and 2012.

Head coach for the 2013 season is Bill Theodoropoulos and his assistant is Franz Weimper.

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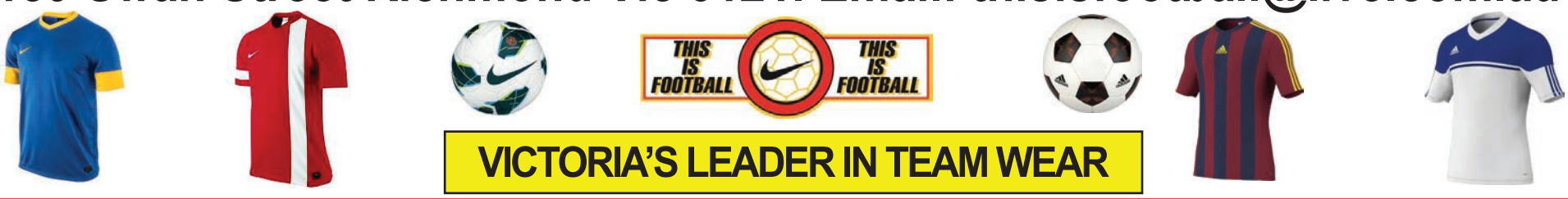
VICTORIA'S LEADER IN TEAM WEAR

PASCOE VALE FC

V-League Standings

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
1 Pascoe Vale FC	22	17	4	1	149	76	+73	55
2 Vic Vipers FC	22	16	3	3	114	71	+43	51
3 Hume FC	22	16	2	4	190	67	+123	50
4 Ashburton FC	22	13	4	5	107	63	+44	43
5 Metropolitan FC	22	14	0	8	158	116	+42	42
6 Moreland FC	22	12	1	9	126	146	-20	37
7 Fitzroy FC	22	8	1	13	87	105	-18	25
8 CF Brunswick	22	8	0	14	93	111	-18	24
9 FC Essendon	22	7	1	14	84	137	-53	22
10 FC Prahran	22	5	1	16	100	160	-60	16
11 FC Balwyn	22	4	1	17	89	184	-95	13
12 Brighton FC	22	3	0	19	62	122	-60	9

Pascoe Vale celebrate with the Futsal Oz Nike V-League trophy.
Back Row: Joao Da Silva, Ernie Simsek, Paul Vidic (Coach), Cem Bicer, Sofiane Soufi, Liam Digby, Selih Sefil
Front Row: Andre Caro, Takuya Umdea, Brenno Pollati, Jose Portillo

PHOTO: DAMIAN BRIGGS

Nike V-League Champions 2012/13

Report By Damian Briggs

Pascoe Vale wins back-to-back Nike V-League titles

Round 22 of the Futsal Oz V-League

The final round of the year saw a massive crowd on hand to see the drama playout of the final day of the season. Match of the round was Pascoe Vale vs. Ashburton and it lived up to the hype. Second placed Vipers suffered a shock loss to Moreland, while at the bottom of the ladder Brighton FC were relegated, and Essendon, Prahran and Balwyn have to play off in order to keep their V-League status.

Pascoe Vale FC captain Andre Caro (L) and Coach Paul Vidic lift the Nike V-League trophy. Photo: DAMIAN BRIGGS

Hume FC's Sacid Cicek (L) taps the ball into the back of the net after a nice pass from teammate Matthew Vragovski. Photo: DAMIAN BRIGGS

Ashburton FC's Lucas Kruel sides into win the ball from Pascoe Vale Traget Soufiane Soufi. Photo: DAMIAN BRIGGS

FC Balwyn's David Filonzi races away from Fitzroy FC's Chris Mullan. Photo: DAMIAN BRIGGS

Pascoe wrap up league with draw against Ashburton

The match of the round delivered as a huge crowd was on hand to see champions Pascoe Vale taking on Ashburton. The early exchanges were even with both teams happy to sit back and see what the other team had. Pascoe Vale opened the scoring midway through the first half with a tidy finish from Brenno Polatti the strike put Ashburton on the back foot. The second half saw Pascoe Vale rattle the woodwork on no less then 4 occasions, however it was Ashburton who were next on the scoresheet with a well worked team goal finished by Julien Afonseca.

Ashbourton could have won the game late on when Matteo Rocca's goal bound effort was well saved by Pascoe Vale shot stopper Cem Bicer. It finished 1-1 and Pascoe Vale were crowned 2012/13 Nike V-League Champions

Ashburton FC 1 *(J. Afonseca) def.* **Pascoe Vale FC 1** *(B. Polatti)*

Moreland shock Vipers

Moreland claimed the scalp of 2nd place Vic Vipers with a clinical display of finishing. Emre Ocal was the star of the show for Moreland the keeper was in fine form and he saved just about everything as he frustrated the Vipers throughout the whole match. Moreland raced to an early 3 goal lead and never looked back as they took the match to the under strength Vipers.

Moreland FC 7 *(S. Akyol 2, B. Koca 2, S. Kul, J. Franjic, T. Korkmaz) def.* **Vic Vipers FC 3** *(L. Stringer 2, A. Cooper)*

Hume finish the season in Style

Hume FC finished the season in fine style with an 11-3 victory over CF Brunswick. Hume had been scoring goals for fun in recent weeks and finished the season in some style with 2012/13 golden boot Vadim Mazurskiy geting a hat-trick, teammate George Harrison chimed in with a hat-trick of his own as Hume ran rampart. CF Brunswick tried to play an attacking brand of Futsal, however Hume's counter attacks where deadly and they punished any mistakes. Both teams have the FOz cup to look forward to now before the 2013 season starts.

Hume FC 11 *(G. Harrison 3, V. Mazurskiy 3, M. Vragovski 2, S. Cicek 2, R. Culculoglu) def.* **CF Brunswick 3** *(D. Slovacek, J. Slovacek, D. Duva)*

Metro deny Brighton victory

Metropolitan FC takes the points in a high scoring affair over relegated Brighton FC. With FC Balwyn defeating Fitzroy in an earlier game Brighton's fate was sealed, however that didn't stop them from going down fighting. Metro on the other hand was clinical and punished Brighton in the top third as Juso Julardzija claimed a hat-trick. Brighton's Christian Safko scored another contender for goal of the season as his free kick went top corner but Metro had too much experience in the end as they collected the points.

Metropolitan FC 8 *(J. Julardzija 3, A. Stevanovic 2, A. Karic, A. Redzepovic, D. Redzepovic) def.* **Brighton FC 7** *(G. O'Reilly 2, C. Safko 2, T. Bayrakli 2, D. Rafiti)*

Balwyn win to keep hopes alive

FC Balwyn avoids the automatic relegation position with win over Fitzroy FC. In a match full of defensive errors, it was Balwyn who wanted the victory more and it showed in the second half as they enjoyed large amounts of possession and took advantage of some Fitzroy mistakes to take the points 6-3

FC Balwyn 6 *(P. Pattas 2, D. Filonzi 2, C. Davies, J. Primerano) def.* **Fitzroy FC 3** *(L. Campbell 3)*

Essendon takes points over Prahran

A full strength FC Essendon takes the points over Prahran. Alex Cobo's Essendon side has looked good in recent weeks and they continued that with a solid victory over a youthful Prahran side. Both clubs will be forced to playoff to see if they will compete in the 2013 Nike V-League. Essendon will be full of confidence heading into the matches.

FC Essendon 7 *(E. Pebara 2, A. Cobo 2, J. Jiminez, D. Bonilla, O. Mohammed) def.* **FC Prahran 1** *(C. Mogoai)*

V-League Standings

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11 FC Balwyn	22	4	1	17	89	184	-95	13
12 Brighton FC	22	3	0	19	62	122	-60	9

Round 21 Clashes Sunday March 10

- FC Balwyn 6-3 Fitzroy FC
- Metropolitan FC 8-7 Brighton FC
- Hume FC 11-3 CF Brunswick
- Ashburton FC 1-1 Pascoe Vale FC
- Moreland FC 7-3 Vic Vipers FC
- FC Essendon 7-1 FC Prahran

NIKE V-League premiership (VLP) v State League Championship (SLC) Qualifiers

1st Leg Wednesday 20th March
7:20pm – FC Carlton Heart (SLC) vs. FC Balwyn (VLP)
8:00pm – Mickleham FC (SLC) vs. FC Prahran (VLP)
9:20pm – FC Collingwood (SLC) vs. FC Essendon (VLP)

2nd Leg Wednesday 27th March
7:20pm – FC Balwyn (VLP) vs. FC Carlton Heart (SLC)
8:00pm – FC Prahran (VLP) vs. Mickleham FC (VLP)
9:20pm - FC Essendon (VLP) vs. FC Collingwood (SLC)

Top Goal Scorers

1 Vadim Mazurskiy - Hume FC	54
2 Alija Redzepovic - Metropolitan FC	45
3 Burukhan Koca - Moreland FC	42
4 Juso Julardzija - Metropolitan FC	40
5 Sofiane Soufi - Pascoe Vale FC	31

The Futbol Town Show every Tuesday 6.30pm on C31 and C44Digital
FUTSAL OZ

Stars of the past celebrate Jim Armstrong's birthday

Blast From The Past

By Roy Hay

The other day there was a gathering of some of the players, officials and others involved in the game to celebrate Jimmy Armstrong's forthcoming 70th birthday. It was a real delight and privilege to be invited and get a chance to talk to many of the players whose careers I have followed through the old newspapers. We did not arrive in Australia till 1977 by which time most of these lads were playing in veterans' teams, if at all. The peaks of their careers were in the 1960s and early 1970s and many of them stepped straight off the boat and into the game.

The birthday boy, Jimmy Armstrong, was born on 21 March 1943 in Scotland and played junior football, that is the semi-professional level just below the top divisions, for Renfrew and Yoker Athletic before coming to Australia in 1962. He had to wait a couple of weeks to get a clearance from Yoker and then he joined Hakoah. Manny Poulakakis picked the team and announced, 'Armstrong, striker!' Jimmy wondered aloud what was going on for he had never played up front up to that point, but as he said later, "I never looked back.' When Hakoah formed part of what became South Melbourne Hellas, Jimmy went on to be a key part of the great Hellas side of the 60s and 70s. He played four times for Australia scoring twice and had three Victorian caps. He remained with the club until it joined the National Soccer League in 1977, then moved to Juventus. Later he performed a series of roles for South Melbourne off the field

Marko Fode was an exceptional keeper. He told me he had never played the game or been involved until he came to Australia. He thought he would be a goalkeeper so he went to MSD and got the gear then turned up for practice with the JUST reserve team. He quickly showed some aptitude though he said he could dive excellently to the right, but found diving to the left a problem. But he worked on it till his left hip was bruised and sore. After a few games with the reserves he was promoted to the first team at 17 and never looked back. He won a cap for Victoria against Moscow Torpedo in 1965.

Billy McIntyre was a striker for Croatia in the heady days of the 1960s when the team established itself in the Victorian State League winning everything in 1968. I first saw him play as a wing-half with Ayr United where he and his younger brother were stars in a team which reached the first division of the Scottish League.

Frank Micic, an elegant defender for JUST and Australia, went to Vietnam with the Australian team which won the Independence Day trophy in the midst of the war in 1967, the first overseas trophy won by an Australian football team. He was in excellent form talking about the players he played with and against in those years and the differences in the styles of various groups involved.

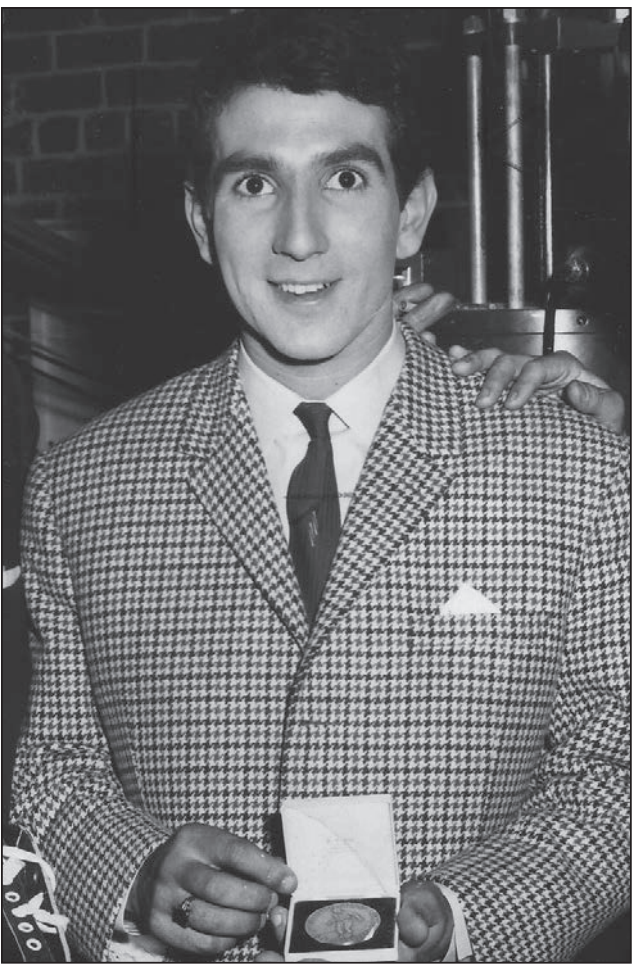
Johnny Sanchez was full of enthusiasm as always. The Slavia boys with whom he won the Australia Cup in 1963 still meet regularly to discuss old times and how they are travelling today.

All in all it was a wonderful occasion and one I will not forget in a hurry.

An incomplete list of those players and officials who attended the party. My apologies to anyone who was there whose name does not appear here.

John Anderson, Jim Armstrong, David Baker, Giovanni Batticiotto, Nigel Bridgeman, Jimmy Campbell, Mike Clarey, Pat Della Rocca, Dino Di Marchi, Joe Dockerty, Marko Fode, Steve Gadsby, Fred Hutchinson, Kris Kalafatidis, Willie Kerr, Ulysses Kokkinos, George Kotarides, Jim Lapish, Robert Levine, Michael Mandalis, Takki Mantarakis, Billy McIntyre, Frank Micic, Hugh Murney, Peter Pryles, Alex Purdie, Doug Rogers, Bill Rowley, Johnny Sanchez, Alastair Scott, Ted Smith, Alan Stenhouse.

Jimmy Armstrong left with David Gorrie on the ground behind him playing for South Melbourne Hellas against JUST in the Victorian State League on 12 July 1970. Photo: Laurie Schwab collection, Deakin University Library.



John Sanchez with the Argus Medal which he won in 1963. Photo: Laurie Schwab collection, Deakin University Library.

Frank Micic, head up, ball under full control, in his pomp with JUST. Photo: Laurie Schwab collection, Deakin University Library.

Jimmy Campbell (Melbourne Croatia) outpaces Claude Lucchesi (Heidelberg Utd) at Olympic Park in 1986. Photo: Les Shorrock collection, Deakin University Library.

Billy McIntyre for Croatia (left) against South Melbourne Hellas. Photo: Laurie Schwab collection, Deakin University Library.

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KEEPING THE FAITH ALIVE

Latin Wrap

By Francis Fields

"Habemus papam" is the Latin phrase at the Vatican when a new pontiff is elected. Not that it has a lot to do with football or does it?

The newly-elected Argentinian pope is a football fan. The 76-year old is a beloved fan and club member of first division club San Lorenzo de Almagro.

When a child, Jorge Mario Bergoglio accompanied his father, a former basketball player with the club. The new Pope is the son of an Italian migrant and a rail worker whom not only becomes the first Latin American Catholic pontiff but has openly declared his love for San Lorenzo.

His early days at the old stadium, the Viejo Gasómetro were the golden days for the club, situated in the northern outskirts of the Buenos Aires capital province. Back in 1946, San Lorenzo obtained its second professional title undefeated with an attacking trio that scored 90 goals in that season.

Bergoglio confessed to having attended every home match, where the names of Armando "Chueco" Farro, René "Huevo" Pontoni and Rinaldo "Mamucho" Martino inundated goals in 30 matches that season, legends for the club.

San Lorenzo is the only "giant" in Argentina not to win a Copa Libertadores title to date. It was the first of the big club to be relegated however, the club is known for its renowned, celebrity faithful.

As last week's announcement from the Vatican marked the commencement of "Francisco" to a new phase in the Church, fellow fans of San Lorenzo are hoping such news can mark a renewed sense of hope.

Such passion ignited for the "Cuervos" (the Crows) are renowned from diverse personalities, Argentine-born actor Viggo Mortensen (Aragorn, in the Lord of the Rings trilogy), alongside a household name in Argentine television, Marcelo Tinelli. Other famous faces include Vicentico, the front man of popular Argentine rock/funk band, and highly respected journalist, writer Osvaldo Soriano.

Since the foundation in 1908, San Lorenzo has a close tie with the Salesian priests in the districts of Almagro and Boedo. One of its priests Lorenzo Massa was in charge of a missionary and a local school when a few boys in an orphanage would play football on the streets. Massa would witness these games almost every afternoon when one day, an accident brought a near-miracle story.

The new pope displaying his beloved colours of San Lorenzo de Almagro

The near miss on a train line sparked Massa to propose the boys in playing football in a proper, newly-installed pitch beside the school. The initiative was immediately embraced and marked the birth of the club.

Both the oratory and orphanage had funds to buy the block of land although the priests in the college suggested the boys play football and attended mass on Sundays. So the proposal took off, until discussions were circling around naming the club.

For many, there were instant agreements in naming the club Almagro however, suggestions were few, far and between. It was not until one of the priests in a meeting came up with the patron saint Lawrence, or Lorenzo as a way of honouring the saint and a fellow local parish priest. This also explains why in local Argentinian football folklore, San Lorenzo are known as the "Saints" and the "cuervos" (Crows) in allusion to the black-coloured robes worn by the priests.

The club nickname of "El Ciclón", (The Cyclone) was given upon the club's first league title in 1933. Its other nickname, the "Gauchos de Boedo" depicts the country Argentine cowboys to whom many players were recruited in 1968 from the regional provinces, champions of 1968. This side was also popularly known as "Los Matadores" (the Matadors).

Upon San Lorenzo's 25th club anniversary, festivities were organised with Father Massa absent, he left a message saying that "the club was born from a saint. The colours depict the importance of the Virgin Mary and the patron saints who protect the activities that provide for the community".

Pope Francis' precedessor, Benedict XVI is a fan of Germany's Bayern Munich whilst the late John Paul II had been a goalkeeper in his youth and a keen alpine adventurer and skier. Back in 1982, the Polish-born pontiff received the membership number 108,000 from Catalan giants FC Barcelona.

Today with over 40% of the world's Catholics hailing from across the Latin American continent, football does inevitably influence and cross paths with the church. In Chile, it is notable for its giant club Universidad Católica and in Uruguay with Bellavista, known as "the popes".

Fred: Neymar should stay in Brazil

Fluminense striker Fred believes compatriot Neymar should remain in Brazil amid the endless speculation linking him with a move abroad.

The 21-year-old is one of the most sought-after talents in world football and has reportedly courted the interest of European giants Bayern Munich and Barcelona, the latter of which are understood to be front-runners to land the star.

However, Fred said Neymar should ignore the allure of playing in Europe and stay in Brazil in a bid to improve the domestic game.

"We Brazilians have to thank God to have a player like him in Brazil. We have to strengthen the chorus of support to get him to stay here, but in the end he will decide," Fred told reporters at a press conference in Geneva.

"Brazilian football is at a very high level and it will help the country with the 2014 World Cup if our stars stayed close to home."

Fred is expected to partner the Santos star in attack for Brazil's friendly with Italy on Thursday, which is followed by a clash with Russia five days later.

Speculation continues to surround Neymar's future.

Wigan surrounds suit Di Santo

Franco Di Santo insists he is happy to remain with relegation-threatened Wigan, despite his contract expiring at the end of the season.

The former Chelsea man is happy with Wigan's progress this season and wants to be a key part of Roberto Martinez's plans at the DW Stadium.

He told TyC Sports: "We're doing fine at Wigan. We are in the semis of the FA Cup. My contract is up in June and I haven't been playing a lot lately because there are too many things going on.

"It'd be key for me to keep playing. I'd love to stay in the Premier League. We'll see about that.

"The beauty of our situation, even if it's complicated in the Premier League, is that we depend on what we can do for ourselves.

"If we beat the teams around us, we have a chance to stay up and you can't prioritise one competition over the other because Wigan fans are incredibly excited about playing in the FA Cup semis."

Di Santo made his Argentina debut earlier this season and is in line to make his first competitive appearance against Venezuela on Saturday.

He added: "I'm happy to be part of the Argentina national team. This is my first in World Cup qualifier. I hope I get to play a bit.

"It's a very proud moment for me or any footballer to share a training session or anything with a player like Lionel Messi."

Argentina international Franco Di Santo is happy at Wigan

Lucas nearing his best

Liverpool midfielder Lucas believes he is finally rediscovering his best form after a succession of injury problems.

The Brazilian matured into a key figure at Anfield following the departures of Xabi Alonso and Javier Mascherano, but saw his campaign cut short last season by an anterior cruciate ligament injury picked up in December 2011.

His return was further hampered by a torn thigh muscle in August, but since returning to the side in December he has been ever-present, and now he believes the stellar performances of old are returning.

"I am not there yet but I feel I am getting very close to my best level," Lucas told the Daily Mail.

"It feels like a good time again. I was sure if I worked hard, I could make it happen. I'm very happy it has.

"After Pepe (Reina) and Daniel (Agger), I have been the longest here. (Jamie) Carragher and Stevie (Gerrard), of course, are out on their own but each season you are here, your responsibility grows.

"I am not a kid anymore. I have responsibilities and to be a role model for these kids is something that makes me really proud.

"It has been an amazing experience. All the work I have put in behind the scenes is beginning to show through."

Lucas endured a rough ride from Liverpool fans at the start of his career in England, and freely admits it took him considerable time and effort to adapt to life far from home.

"It was very hard," he said. "At first I couldn't speak the language, I didn't have many friends and family was not here.

"It was a struggle to get to know people and I found it difficult getting involved in the day-to-day things that went on at the club.

"Yes, the food was different and the city was new but I lead a quiet life and those aspects were not too much of a problem. I just felt that if I could handle it all, I'd get there.

"I needed to be mentally strong otherwise it would have been tough."

Blatter backs Brazil to deliver

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has reaffirmed his belief that Brazil will deliver a successful World Cup in 2014.

The 77-year-old is in the country ahead of the Confederations Cup and attended a meeting with the Brazilian Sports Minister Aldo Rebelo to discuss progress ahead of the tournament.

"I am sure that the five time winners will present an outstanding competition in 2014," he told Fifa.com.

"I am confident that through its economic power and strength of will, Brazil will be ready and deliver a wonderful World Cup."

Rebelo has also given reassurances that the new stadiums will be ready ahead of the December 2013 deadline, and highlighted Brazil's delight in hosting the tournament.

"The preparations for the World Cup will meet the expectations of the organisers and, of course, Brazil," he said.

"This is a vital event for Brazil. We're delighted and honoured to be able to host it."

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London Calling

By Samuel Collins

Pivotal summer awaits Mancini

Manchester City's grip on the EPL title appears all but over. And what of Mancini's future?

When Inter Milan dismissed their coach Roberto Mancini back in 2008, owner Massimo Moratti claimed it was "for the benefit of the club". It was Mancini's comments after a Champions League exit to Liverpool, insisting he would quit, before changing his mind a day later, that proved to be crucial in his axing.

But the Italian's inability to conquer Europe also crossed Moratti's mind more than once. "I have to be honest, I didn't see anything that gave me confidence," Moratti memorably quipped following the 2-0 first leg loss to Rafa Benítez's Reds at Anfield five years ago.

What increased the frustration for the Nerazzurri board, was that this was the fourth successive campaign, under Mancini's guidance, that the club had floundered in the competition. In 2005, it was against AC Milan. In 2006, it was Villarreal. In 2007, it was Valencia. Mancini never managed to get past a quarter-final during his four years at San Siro. He still hasn't.

Like throughout his reign at Inter, Mancini has brought undoubted domestic success to Manchester City. In Italy, it was Serie A titles, Coppa Italias and Super Cups, while at the Etihad, it has been a Premier League and an FA Cup. But no Champions League. In fact, not even Champions League knock-out football. The groups weren't kind, this season or last - City have faced Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, Napoli and Borussia Dortmund - but a side who have spent circa £980m in transfer frees and have an annual wage bill of £200m under Sheikh Mansour's five-year ownership should be doing better, right?

Saturday's lunchtime defeat at Everton ended any faint hopes City had of retaining their title. Reports claimed that Mancini kept his team locked in the dressing room at Goodison Park, berating a squad he labelled "gutless". It was those who hadn't played, though, which proved costly. The team's spine - Vincent Kompany, Yaya Toure and Sergio Aguero - were all absent, and it showed. But they all played in the Champions League; of 18 possible appearances between the trio this season, they made 17. And even with the gap from neighbours Manchester United in the league now at a colossal 15 points, it might not have mattered, had it gone right in Europe.

"If we think we can win it after two years, we're crazy," Mancini said in November. One could argue he's right. It took Roman Abramovich nine years to witness his Chelsea empire lift the game's most prestigious prize. The problem for Mancini, though, is that Chelsea won it after Abramovich had sacked seven managers.

Blame for City's shortcomings this season has been, in some quarters, directed at Brian Marwood, a major executive at the Eithad, who ultimately failed to lure Robin van Persie to the blue half of Manchester last August. Those who did arrive - Scott Sinclair (£8m), Jack Rodwell (£17m), Maicon (£3.5m) and Javi García (£15.8m) - have all disappointed, augmenting an underwhelming transfer window. Young centre-half Matija Nastasić (£12m) has impressed, though, and the squad is already one of the finest in football. The truth is, Mancini has underachieved. And the 2013 FA Cup might not be enough for owner Sheikh Mansour. But should Mancini still be in charge come pre-season, the 48-year old must get it right this summer.

While diversity in tactics can be imperative, constant alternating between systems - 4-2-3-1 and 3-5-2 - over the campaign seems to have dumbfounded City's players. It worked well against Tottenham in November; losing 1-0 with 4-2-3-1, Mancini switched to 3-5-2, bringing on right-wing back Maicon and won 2-1. But that was a rarity. A settled formation in which the coach can get the best from his side would aid his squad's chances next term. And what of that squad? It's no secret that there are plenty of ins and outs ahead.

"Manchester City have plans in place for the summer," Ian Ladyman, the Daily Mail journalist with sources inside the club, said on Monday. Uruguay forward Edinson Cavani remains top of City's wishlist, though "contact with Napoli has got absolutely nowhere", while Ladyman adds that Samir Nasri and Joleon Lescott could be transfer-listed. "The problem is, we don't know who the manager will be."

That's the issue. And that issue was aggravated on Monday when reports in Italy claimed that Roma had identified Mancini as their preferred coach for next season. When you acknowledge that José Mourinho - the man who succeeded Mancini at Inter and won the treble in 2010 - is highly likely to be available this summer, the managerial scenario at the Etihad seems clouded.

Like Sir Alex Ferguson had to witness City snatch their first title in 44 years on the final day of last season, seeing United being crowned English champions for the 20th time next month should provide all the motivation necessary for City to respond next term. Domestically, and in Europe, whoever is the manager.

Balkan Wrap

By Alex Milic

The venue - Zagreb's Maksimir Stadion

Croatia v Serbia Preview

Second-placed Croatia host third placed Serbia at the Maksimir stadium in Zagreb in one of the world's biggest derby matches.

Yet while the atmosphere at the Maksimi Stadium is sure to be fervent and partisan, both coaches are treating the Group A encounter like any other – publicly at least.

Though victory for Igor Štimac's hosts could propel them to the summit, depending on how leaders Belgium fare against the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and take them nine points clear of third-placed Serbia, the former Croatia defender maintains the match will not be "decisive" for either side.

"Every game carries the same amount of points and all opponents are very difficult," said Štimac, whose team have beaten FYROM (twice) and Wales and drawn with Belgium in their four qualifiers to date. "For the first time Croatia are in a group where there is no team that can be considered outsiders."

"I implore the Croatian fans to back us with their love for the national team and not hatred for our opponents," Croatia coach Igor Stimac told reporters ahead of the fixture which will be played under tight security in Dinamo Zagreb's Maksimir stadium.

"All those who turn up should support us in the most dignified manner and if they do, they will put the much-needed wind in our sails to get the result we want in this historic match.

"This is a great chance to show everyone, including FIFA and UEFA, what we are really like. Both teams have the capacity to keep this event a football match and show the world that they are great football nations."

Stimac's plea echoed assessments by his Serbian counterpart Sinisa Mihajlovic that those with football at heart should lay the ghosts of a bygone era to rest and let the beautiful game take centre stage.

Among other things, Mihajlovic instructed his players when he took over last May to applaud the national anthems of Serbia's rivals in every match and said the games against Croatia, with the reverse fixture in Belgrade on Sept. 6, would be no exception.

Both federations have agreed not to take away fans to either match in order to allay fears of crowd trouble

Serbia's Siniša Mihajlovic, meanwhile, is downplaying the significance of the Balkan derby. "The match with Croatia is the same as a match with Belgium," he said. "If we win we will gain three points. If the match could bring us six points it would be different."

"The Croatians are clearly the better and more experienced side, they've been together for a very long time and have some world-class players who are instrumental for their clubs," the 44-year-old coach told a news conference on Saturday.

"We, on the other hand, are a young side awash with lads who may not know how good they really are and what they need is a breakthrough against a top side like Croatia to boost their confidence.

"We are going there to enjoy ourselves and my players need no motivational speech for this one, the opposition should bring the best out of them but we must stay calm and avoid burning out with anxiety before the regional derby kicks off," he said.

Mihajlovic, a former defender-turned-midfielder who won the European Cup with Red Star Belgrade in 1991, was at the heart of the rump Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's success when they reached Euro 2000 at Croatia's expense with a 2-2 draw at the same venue

What is not up for debate, however, is Serbia's need for a victory in the Croatian capital. Mihajlovic's team have only registered one win in four in the section – a 6-1 success against Wales in September – yet the former Yugoslavia left-back is "convinced we [still] have a good chance to qualify" for the finals in Brazil. "I believe in my players and I believe in myself, so I'm very optimistic."

Croatia Squad

Goalkeepers: *Stipe Pletikosa, Danijel Subasic, Dario Kresic*

Defenders: *Darijo Srna (Captain), Josip Simunic, Vedran Corluka, Ivan Strinic, Gordon Schildenfeld, Dejan Lovren, Domagoj Vida.*

Midfielders: *Niko Kranjcar, Luka Modric, Ivan Rakitic, Ognjen Vukojevic, Milan Badelj, Sammir, Josip Radosevic, Arijan Ademi, Mateo Kovacic.*

Forwards: *Ivica Olic, Eduardo, Mladen Petric, Mario Mandzukic*

Manager: *Igor Stimac*

Serbia Squad

Goalkeeprs: *Vladimir Stojkovic, Branimir Aleksic, Zeljko Brkic*

Defenders: *Branislav Ivanovic (Captain), Aleksandar Kolarov, Neven Subotic, Antonio Rukavina, Milan Bisevac, Slobodan Rajkovic, Nenad Tomovic, Matija Nastasic, Dusan Basta*

Midfielders: *Zoran Tosic, Zdravko Kuzmanovic, Radosav Petrovic, Dusan Tadic, Aleksandar Ignjovski, Ljubomir Fejsa, Filim Duricic, Ivan Radovanovic, Luka Milivojevic, Nenad Krsticic, Alen Stevanovic*

Forwards: *Filip Dordjevic, Marko Scepovic, Nikola Durdic*

Manager: Sinisa Mihajlovic

Igor Stanic

Slnisa Mihajlovic

In other news Red Star Belgrade has appointed former Portugal and Sporting Lisbon striker Ricardo Sa Pinto as its new manager.

Sa Pinto is confident he can turn around Red Star Belgrade's fortunes after taking over from Aleksandar Jankovic at the 1991 European Cup winners, the former Portugal forward said on Tuesday.

Sa Pinto agreed a 15-month contract with Red Star, who parted company with Jankovic by mutual consent on Monday after Sunday's 2-1 defeat at Radnicki Nis left them 11 points behind champions and league leaders Partizan Belgrade.

"Red Star is a big club always aiming for titles and we have to try to win the title this season although we know it's going to be tough and the outcome is not in our hands," the 40-year-old coach told reporters at Belgrade airport.

"I come from Sporting Lisbon, another big club where pressure goes with the territory whether you are a coach or a player, so I am looking forward to the challenge," he said.

Second-placed Red Star last won the title in 2007 and are staring at a trophyless season after they were also knocked out of the Serbian Cup and eliminated from the Europa League preliminary rounds in September.

They also owe in excess of 50 million euros ($64.8 million)to various creditors and have been unable to pay players' wages on a regular basis this season but club officials said they would find donors for Sa Pinto's reported annual salary of 200,000 euros.

"The money for his income will have to come from outside the club's thin budget and senior managing board members have apparently found creditors," Red Star's sports director Zoran Stojadinovic said.

"Sa Pinto was an outstanding player and I think he has the confidence to become an excellent coach. We don't expect to win the league title this year because that would put him in an awkward position."

Sa Pinto, who was briefly in charge at Sporting Lisbon last year after working as an assistant at Uniao Leiria, played nine years in two spells at Sporting before ending his career at Belgian side Standard Liege in 2007.

EPL Wrap

By Andrew Bishara

United on the verge of 20th title

When Everton were leading against 1-0 against Manchester City, the TV commentator said that unless that City still believed that in winning the title, they would have no hope of retaining. 70 minutes later, Manchester City lost 2-0, a game were they were outrun, outplayed and completely outgunned by Everton; who had only 10 men for the last thirty minutes. 3 hours later, Manchester United won 1-0. This was the weekend that the title was lost for City.

The title race, many critics and fans have said, was over for a while. This was merely the straw that broke the camel's back; the final nail in the coffin. A 15 gap is almost uncatchable, unless United completely go for the rails - a very unlikely outcome given the way they are playing. Credit is due. There is no doubting they deserve to be champions.

Say what you will about them; United have been ruthless in their approach this season. Last season's very painful defeat, losing by goal difference, blowing a 8 point lead with only 6 games remaining, has clearly been the catalyst for their victory this season. After the Sunderland game last season, when the title was lost, Sir Alex Ferguson told his players to remember this feeling and to make sure not to feel it again. From the very beginning, United have rampaged through the season. Many say that United's success is down to the signing of Robin Van Persie. Yes, there is no questing the Dutchman's effect at Old Trafford. For the first half of the season, his performances were the reason United opened up the gap. Even City boss, Roberto Mancini admitted that Van Persie is "the difference between us and United."

Say what you will about them; United have been ruthless in their approach this season. Last season's very painful defeat, losing by goal difference, blowing a 8 point lead with only 6 games remaining, has clearly been the catalyst for their victory this season.

His hot form, just like every footballer, has slowed down in recent weeks. Yet the over reliance isn't there, say compared to when Van Persie played at Arsenal. United are loaded with talent, and when the push came to shove, Rooney, Kagawa, Cleverly, Young, and so forth, came to the fore.

Comeback after comeback; last minute winners and thrashing the opposition. And of course, narrow, dull victories - the game that champions win, when they shouldn't. Following the loss against Real Madrid and the 2-2 draw against Chelsea in the FA Cup, the talk around Old Trafford was that United were suffering from "mental tiredness". It was something that Mancini hoped would help City catch up. How wrong he was.

City has not been the team they were last season. They lack energy, complete motivation. It seems that last season's epic heroics burnt the team out. An absurd notion, considering the team had a summer break to refresh, but there are a host of factors have contributed to the team's fall. Under-par signings haven't added anything extra to the team. Those signings also failed to cover the areas they needed most, (centre back), then there is the poor performances of some players - who clearly are dead in the water from last season - specifically Samir Nasri. And unlike United; an overreliance on certain players.

Not taking anything from United though. They have been the best team this season. And the season is not over yet. With a replay in the FA Cup against Chelsea to come, the season can end with another trophy in the cabinet. If they beat Chelsea, only City can stop them in the semi-final. But how many times have we said that before?

The Red Devils are poised to take out top honours for a record time

ENGLAND EPL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Manchester United	29	24	2	3	69	31	+38	74	W W W W W
2 Manchester City	29	17	8	4	51	26	+25	59	L W W L D
3 Chelsea	29	16	7	6	58	30	+28	55	W W L W L
4 Tottenham Hotspur	30	16	6	8	51	37	+14	54	L L W W W
5 Arsenal	29	14	8	7	55	32	+23	50	W L W W W
6 Everton	29	12	12	5	46	35	+11	48	W W L L D
7 Liverpool	30	12	9	9	57	39	+18	45	L W W W L
8 West Bromwich …	30	13	5	12	40	38	+2	44	D W L W W
9 Swansea City	30	10	10	10	40	38	+2	40	L L W L W
10 Fulham	29	9	9	11	40	44	-4	36	W D W D L
11 Stoke City	30	7	13	10	27	35	-8	34	D L L L W
12 Norwich City	30	7	13	10	28	46	-18	34	D D L W D
13 Newcastle United	30	9	6	15	41	52	-11	33	L W L W L
14 West Ham United	29	9	6	14	32	43	-11	33	L W L L W
15 Sunderland	30	7	10	13	33	42	-9	31	D L D L L
16 Southampton	30	7	10	13	42	52	-10	31	W D L L W
17 Aston Villa	30	7	9	14	31	56	-25	30	W W L L W
18 Wigan Athletic	29	7	6	16	35	56	-21	27	W L W L D
19 Reading	30	5	8	17	35	57	-22	23	L L L L L
20 Queens Park Ra…	30	4	11	15	26	48	-22	23	L W W L L

Latest Results	Next Match
Everton 2 - 0 Man City	Sunderland v Man Utd
Aston Villa 3 - 2 QPR	Arsenal v Reading
Southampton 3 - 1 Liverpool	Man City v Newcastle Utd
Stoke City 0 - 0 WBA	Southampton v Chelsea
Swansea City 0 - 2 Arsenal	Swansea City v Tottenham
Man Utd 1 - 0 Reading	West Ham v WBA
Sunderland 1 - 1 Norwich City	Wigan v Norwich City
Tottenham 0 - 1 Fulham	Everton v Stoke City
Chelsea 2 - 0 West Ham	Aston Villa v Liverpool
Wigan 2 - 1 Newcastle Utd	Fulham v QPR

One To Watch This Weekend...

If England is to qualify nice and early, they'll have to beat Montenegro, who currently lead Group H. Travelling to Montenegro won't be easy, so don't expect a whitewash result.

World Cup Qualifying Preview

The Premier League takes a break this weekend, with World Cup Qualification back on the cards. England will first play San Marino on the 22nd of March, followed by Montenegro on the 26th. The biggest news surrounding the England national team has been the Rio Ferdinand's omission from the squad.

Roy Hodgson had initially selected Ferdinand "on merit" and suggested that the veteran could have a role to play at the World Cup itself in Brazil next summer.

"He has been playing well and his team have been playing extremely well. I think this is the moment to select him because he certainly deserves it on current form." said Hodgson.

However, things changed when Ferdinand withdrew because of fitness concerns with the player explaining that his "intricate" training and medical program made it impossible for him to join up and play two games in four days.

"I'm disappointed Rio will not be available but due to the detailed pre-planned training and medical programme he must follow it's not possible," said Hodgson.

"However, I was pleased that Rio called and asked to meet with me. It was important to hear from him personally about the way he must manage his body between games."

Ferdinand admitted he was "gutted" about the decision, but believed it was the right decision.

"It is disappointing that I won't be able to play a part in the upcoming games but I told Roy that I want to continue to be available for England and I look forward to working with him in the future" said Ferdinand.

Tottenham's Steven Caulker has been called in to replace the defender in the 26-man squad, which features the return of West Bromwich Albion goalkeeper Ben Foster.

Foster recently reversed his decision to quit international football. Hodgson was excited about the prospect of keeper's return.

"We are pleased we have, in our opinion, two excellent goalkeepers. Ben is playing very well for his club team at the moment and it is good that he has decided after a long absence that he wants to play again."

The biggest withdrawal from the squad is Arsenal midfielder Jack Wilshere, who has been ruled out for three weeks with an ankle injury.

"It's a blow. It's disappointing for Jack, he had enjoyed a good spell of playing regularly after such a long lay-off. He did so well in a cameo appearance against Sweden and then against Brazil he was man of the match," Hodgson said. "So to find we can't use him again is a major blow but these things happen, injuries occur in football. We still have a strong squad"

That strong squad consists of blend of experience and youth; a formula Hodgson believes will bring success to England.

"In an ideal team you have a mix of experience and youth and if you can blend them together … if you look at all the good teams there are players who have a lot of games behind them and a few who are making their way in the game. I would like to think the England team strikes a balance between youth and experience but I would never decry the importance of experience because it's something you can't buy."

Andrew Bishara runs the popular football website http://thetrequartista.com

Can Moyes Make It In Manchester?

London Eye

By Robert Davis

Over the next few years, an opportunity is going to arise in the footballing world that will stand alone in its own magnitude of importance. Replacing a man who was once described as 'The Godfather' of football management, it's the equivalent of entering a talent show and having to follow The Beatles. The man who replaces Sir Alex Ferguson's near 27 year reign at Manchester United is in for one hell of a tough task.

It's a job that only a few names can be considered for, with an endless list of pros and cons that can be drawn up for any of the small pool of possible applicants. Jose Mourinho has long been associated with the position alongside other managerial heavyweights such as Pep Guardiola and Carlo Ancelotti. One name that continues to reappear in the rumour columns though is that of David Moyes.

The Everton manager for over ten years, the 49-year-old has won precisely nothing since his appointment in 2002, with a 2009 FA Cup runners up medal all he has to show for his time in charge of the Merseyside club. What can Moyes bring to the table that the likes of Mourinho and Guardiola wouldn't be able to?

One thing on the Scotsman side that not many others can provide is dedication to the cause. The third longest serving manager currently in the Premier League, Moyes has proved he can survive the bad times as well as the good ones. Staying at one club for longer than five years, let alone ten is a huge achievement in modern football and not many others can hold a that above him.

Moyes' longevity can be viewed in a different light though. Much like Arsene Wenger's time at Arsenal, why would a chairman sack a manager who is providing the bare minimum, for Everton a top half finish, whilst spending much less than others in his position would. With Moyes in charge, Everton aren't going to get relegated (although a 17th place finish in the 2003/2004 season was cutting it close), whilst in the past six terms, the Toffees have finished eighth or higher in the league.

Everton chairman Bill Kenwright has no real excuse to sack Moyes. If he did make that decision, he would have to pay off the remainder of Moyes' contract, as well as digging deep into his pockets to find a replacement for his established Premier League club.

Kenwright is known for his tight pursestrings and Moyes' ability to work under such conditions as well as produce acceptable league positions each season is commendable in such a ruthless environment. If placed in charge at United, he will certainly have a bit more money to play with, but under the ownership of the Glazer family, working to a budget would certainly be an attractive selling point.

The conditions that Moyes has worked under during his time at Everton is highlighted by the frequent lack of depth within the squad. Usually able to put together a solid starting eleven, there have been many an Everton bench over the years that have been truly depressing to look at. Moyes has rarely been able to add that extra bit of quality to his side that would give him the ability to rotate his squad on a regular basis.

With that in mind, it's strange that Moyes hasn't been able to bring much of a youth presence into the first team. With the obvious exception of a certain Wayne Rooney, only a handful really stand out since Moyes has been at Goodison Park.

David Moyes has been touted as a potential successor to Sir Alex Ferguson's throne at Old Trafford.

One thing on the Scotsman side that not many others can provide is dedication to the cause. The third longest serving manager currently in the Premier League, Moyes has proved he can survive the bad times as well as the good ones.

Liverpool has such a huge catchment area for young players and with the size of club that Everton is and the kind of budget they work under, you feel that not much talent is being unearthed (I must reiterate, Rooney an exception). Jose Baxter was the last wonder kid who was tipped for huge things from the academy, yet now plies his trade with Oldham Athletic in League Two. Jack Rodwell's career is still failing to take off at Manchester City due to persistent injuries, whilst current hopes are pinned on Ross Barkley who is on loan at Championship side Leeds United.

The Red Devils rich history of bringing youth through their academy system is something that any manager replacing Ferguson will have to adhere to. The recent lack of academy players making a name for themselves at Old Trafford is screaming for someone to give more attention to that area of the club now more than ever.

The amount of media attention that United receive worldwide make it important that the person given the chance to takeover doesn't attract unwanted press or attention, something that would seriously hinder Mourinho's chances of landing the role.

Moyes, like every manager has had his run-ins with referees and the Football Association, but for the most part, comes across very well spoken in interviews and has certainly calmed down since his arrival into the Premier League.

The beauty of this debate is that no one really knows how it's all going to pan out. After almost 30 years with the same manager, it may be too big a task for anyone to take over at United and expect to carry on where Ferguson left off.

Moyes may not appear to be the right man to take over the helm at Old Trafford, but with a job of this nature and size, can any manager truly be the perfect fit to take over from 'The Godfather'?

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Next Manchester Utd Manager

Jose Mourinho	3/1
David Moyes	7/2
Pep Guardiola	4/1
Ole Gunnar Solskjaer	10/1
Jurgen Klopp	16/1
Michael Laudrup	33/1
Joachin Loew	33/1
Carlo Angelotti	50/1
Fabio Capello	66/1
Steve McLaren	125/1

Wrap Italia

By Luca Cetta

Race for Europe heating up

All the major European contenders except Lazio were weekend winners, while Juventus took another step towards the Scudetto. Wild weather caused the postponement of Sampdoria's clash with Inter.

Five matches without a win had stalled Napoli's Scudetto challenge and with a red-hot Milan closing in, their goal switched to securing second place. That will guarantee a spot in the Champions League group phase in 2013-14, rather than having to negotiate the tricky qualifying round.

Walter Mazzarri's men were not helped by the goal-drought of Uruguayan hitman Edinson Cavani, without a goal in eight matches in all competitions. The press were looking for all sorts of reasons behind the slump, including the personal and probably absurd. One story had Cavani having an affair shortly after his wife gave birth to their second child.

When the action began against Atalanta on Sunday, Cavani was back to scoring ways. He netted a penalty, before Paolo Cannavaro's unfortunate own goal drew the Nerazzurri level. Cavani turned sharply to finish his second and restore Napoli's lead, but German Denis haunted his old club with an equaliser. The last time Goran Pandev found the net, the Mayan prophecy was still a chance of occurring. Yet his first goal in over five months crucially gave Napoli three points as they attempt to fend off Milan.

Cavani said afterwards he leaves his talking to the pitch, while Mazzarri urges focus despite a showdown with Milan in the near future. "We are not already thinking about the game with Milan. We had the same discussions before the Juventus match and then we dropped points against Udinese and Sampdoria, so we have to take it one game at a time."

Milan put aside their Champions League disappointment to defeat struggling Palermo 2-0. Mario Balotelli netted a double to dispose of the Serie B-bound Sicilians. Super Mario converted an early penalty after being pulled back. Substitute M'Baye Niang's low cross hit Salvatore Aronica then Stefano Sorrentino, before Balotelli blasted beyond the goalkeeper.

Fiorentina were twice pegged back by Genoa, but managed a 3-2 victory. Alberto Aquilani was on the end of Adem Ljajic's cross to open the scoring, but Daniele Portanova headed Genoa level before the hour. Juan Cuadrado restored Fiorentina's lead, before Luca Antonelli's equaliser. Ex-Viola defender Mattia Cassani got the last touch on Gonzalo Rodriguez's header 13 minutes from time to seal the result.

Three wins and a draw had propelled Roma into European contention ahead of the clash with Parma. The visitors ended an eight-match winless streak versus Torino a week ago, but were found wanting against the Giallorossi. Erik Lamela netted an early opener, before Francesco Totti's 226th Serie A strike – taking him to outright second in the all-time scorers list ahead of Gunnar Nordahl – from a free kick.

Torino and Lazio were battling the elements as well as each other in Turin. Snowfall made conditions difficult, but Vladimir Petkovic's side had to win given their recent slide. They had recorded just one win in eight, but were looking impressive in Europe, progressing to the Europa League last eight. Yet Torino essentially ensured their survival against the Romans, who lost Michael Ciani to two bookable offences after just 17 minutes. Jonathas flicked in the winner with just 12 minutes remaining.

Elsewhere, Catania reinvigorated their European hopes with a 3-1 win over Udinese. Alejandro Gomez netted a brace for the Sicilians. Goals from Mirko Vucinic and Claudio Marchisio helped Juventus continue their march towards the Scudetto, as they won impressively at in-form Bologna.

Pescara slumped to another defeat, this time against Chievo. Siena were unable to get out of the relegation zone as they were held to a scoreless draw by Cagliari. Meanwhile, Sampdoria's match with Inter was washed out due to torrential rain, with authorities deeming on Sunday morning it would be unsafe to stage the match.

Looking ahead: Azzurri take centre stage

Serie A is on hiatus this weekend as international football returns to the scene. Italy are in action twice, with a Thursday friendly versus Brazil followed by their World Cup 2014 qualifier away at Malta on Tuesday.

Cesare Prandelli has added two new faces to the side, Milan defender Mattia De Sciglio and Torino winger Alessio Cerci. Genoa's Luca Antonelli returns for the first time since 2010, while Roma pair Pablo Osvaldo and Daniele De Rossi are suspended versus Malta, but can face Brazil. Marco Verratti is injured and so not chosen, while Leonardo Bonucci returns to the squad after missing the February Netherlands friendly for disciplinary reasons. Giorgio Chiellini has been training separately from the squad and is expected to miss both matches through injury.

Italy are in action in June's Confederations Cup – where they will again meet Brazil - and so the friendly represents a solid test in preparation for that competition. So far post-Euro 2012 Italy have faced England, France and the Dutch. They last played Brazil at the 2009 Confederations Cup, where Marcello Lippi's side were convincingly defeated 3-0. The Azzurri have not tasted victory over Brazil since their famous 1982 World Cup win.

The meeting in Malta will be the nation's second of the qualifying round. Italy were 2-0 winners back in September and currently top the group by four points after four matches, with Bulgaria second.

Italy squad to face Brazil and Malta:

Goalkeepers: Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus), Morgan De Sanctis (Napoli), Federico Marchetti (Lazio), Salvatore Sirigu (Paris Saint Germain);
Defenders: Ignazio Abate (Milan), Luca Antonelli (Genoa), Davide Astori (Cagliari), Andrea Barzagli (Juventus), Leonardo Bonucci (Juventus), Giorgio Chiellini (Juventus), Mattia De Sciglio (Milan), Christian Maggio (Napoli), Andrea Ranocchia (Inter);
Midfielders: Antonio Candreva (Lazio), Alessio Cerci (Torino), Daniele De Rossi (Roma), Alessandro Diamanti (Bologna), Emanuele Giaccherini (Juventus), Claudio Marchisio (Juventus), Riccardo Montolivo (Milan), Andrea Pirlo (Juventus), Andrea Poli (Sampdoria);
Forwards: Mario Balotelli (Milan), Stephan El Shaarawy (Milan), Alberto Gilardino (Bologna), Sebastian Giovinco (Juventus), Pablo Osvaldo (Roma)

A busy period awaits the Azzurri as it faces Brazil and Malta, and then Confederation Cup duties in June.

ITALY Serie A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Juventus	29	20	5	4	57	18	+39	65	W W D W L
2 Napoli	29	16	8	5	50	26	+24	56	W L D D D
3 Milan	29	16	6	7	52	32	+20	54	W W W D W
4 Fiorentina	29	15	6	8	53	35	+18	51	W W W L W
5 Internazionale	28	14	5	9	44	37	+7	47	L W D L W
6 Lazio	29	14	5	10	37	35	+2	47	L L L W L
7 Roma	29	14	5	10	60	49	+11	47	W D W W W
8 Catania	29	13	6	10	39	36	+3	45	W L L W W
9 Udinese	29	10	11	8	38	38	+0	41	L D W D L
10 Sampdoria	28	10	6	12	35	33	+2	35	L W W D W
11 Bologna	29	10	5	14	39	38	+1	35	L W W W L
12 Parma	29	9	8	12	36	39	-3	35	L W L L L
13 Cagliari	29	9	8	12	35	48	-13	35	D W L W W
14 Chievo	29	10	5	14	31	44	-13	35	W W L L D
15 Torino	29	8	12	9	34	36	-2	35	W L D L W
16 Atalanta	29	10	5	14	30	42	-12	33	L W W L L
17 Genoa	29	6	8	15	29	45	-16	26	L L L D W
18 Siena	29	8	7	14	29	40	-11	25	D W L L W
19 Pescara	29	6	3	20	21	58	-37	21	L L L L L
20 Palermo	29	3	12	14	23	43	-20	21	L L D D D

Latest Results	Next Match
Catania 3 - 1 Udinese	Udinese v Bologna
Bologna 0 - 2 Juventus	Lazio v Catania
Siena 0 - 0 Cagliari	Cagliari v Fiorentina
Napoli 3 - 2 Atalanta	Inter v Juventus
Pescara 0 - 2 Chievo	Parma v Pescara
Fiorentina 3 - 2 Genoa	Palermo v Roma
Milan 2 - 0 Palermo	Atalanta v Sampdoria
Sampdoria PSTP Inter	Genoa v Siena
Torino 1 - 0 Lazio	Chievo v Milan
Roma 2 - 0 Parma	Torino v Napoli

One To Watch This Weekend...

Italy have not won a friendly match since November 2011, a 2-0 win over Poland. Following that, the Azzurri lost five straight before a last minute draw in Amsterdam. They will look to end that streak against Brazil.

Viva Espana

By Pepe Lopez

Spanish Euro Recovery

No, Spain's economic woes have not recovered, however all 4 Spanish UEFA Champions League participants improved in their Round of 16 2nd legs. Unfortunately, Valencia's away draw with Paris St. Germain was not enough prevent their departure from the competition, however it was an impressive performance compared to their 1st leg home loss.

Spain's other 3 clubs, FC Barcelona, Real Madrid and FC Malaga all recorded memorable 2nd leg results, if not controversial (Real Madrid at Manchester United). Whilst Real were assisted by one now infamous red card issued to Man United's Portuguese winger Nani, Barcelona and Malaga saved some of their best football this season to record high scoring home wins and qualify for the Quarter Final stages of the UEFA Champions League.

Of the remaining 8 clubs in the UCL, Spain with 3 clubs, now has most participants compared to Germany's 2, and 1 each from France, Italy & Turkey. TAB Sports Bet ranks FC Barcelona as $2.40 favourites to become 2013 European Champions, closely followed by Real Madrid at $3.20. The German clubs are some distance behind with Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund $5.50 and $7.50 outside bets respectively.

Juventus remain as the clubs with realistic odds of $11, then PSG, Malaga and Galatasaray are ranked as mere "also rans" at $34, $41 and $67. In the Quarter-Final draw, Real Madrid were drawn with Galatasaray, Malaga with Borussia Dortmund and Barcelona with PSG.

Speaking to UEFA.com, Barca Sporting Director Andoni Zubizaretta had this to say of his French opponents; "PSG have very good players with a lot of talent. With their experience and knowledge of playing these types of games I am sure they will be challenging right until the end. They are very competitive and we'll be up against several players we know well. PSG are a complete side who are defensively strong and have quality attackers. We have learned so much from the last round and must correct our mistakes. PSG are obviously very difficult opponents but the draw looks good to me."

PSG were to be without their star Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, after he was sent off in PSG's away fixture with Valencia in the Round of 16. Zlatan was issued a 2 game suspension for a reckless tackle deemed dangerous and using excessive force, however UEFA have agreed to hear a PSG appeal for Zlatan's suspension to be reduced to just 1 game and therefore potentially making him available for PSG's home leg against Barcelona in the Quarter Finals, which could well even out the tie somewhat, as PSG are currently $5 outsiders to even qualify for the semi-final stage at Barcelona's expense.

PSG Director of Football, Leonardo had this to say of his club's tie with Barcelona; "It is the most difficult draw against the best team in the competition. It won't be easy, but we are looking forward to it because Paris deserves to be part of what will be a celebration of football. We can measure ourselves against one of the greatest sides of all time. Barcelona are red-hot favourites, but anything can happen."

Mourinho: Ronaldo deserved Ballon d'Or

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho believes Cristiano Ronaldo deserved to win the 2012 Ballon d'Or ahead of Lionel Messi.

The Barcelona star picked up the award for the fourth straight year, but the former Inter boss feels that Ronaldo's exploits in La Liga should have seen him pip his rival.

"Cristiano should have won the award to the best player in the world," Mourinho told RTP1.

"He was champion in La Liga, he was decisive in the league with all the records."

Messi broke Gerd Muller's 40-year record of 85 goals for club and country in a calendar year to win the award, but only won the Copa del Rey as Barca surrendered their Spanish and European crowns.

Ronaldo, meanwhile, scored 46 goals in 38 Liga appearances as Real became the first team to record a tally of 100 points.

Del Bosque wary of talented France

Spain coach Vicente del Bosque has highlighted the threat posed by France ahead of the teams' crucial World Cup qualifying clash.

Spain are at home to Finland on Friday, while France host Georgia, before the two heavyweights meet in Paris next Tuesday, in a match likely to prove decisive in determining the outcome of Group I.

Their previous encounter ended in a 1-1 draw in Madrid last October, when Olivier Giroud's 94th-minute equaliser earned France an invaluable point at Estadio Vicente Calderon.

With that frustrating result in mind, Del Bosque feels the world and European champions must be at their best to earn all three points at the Stade de France.

"(France coach) Didier Deschamps has very good players," Del Bosque said.

"These are players who are as good as ours, as they showed during the second period of the first leg of Spain-France.

"I can even say that at some point they were better than us.

"We made mistakes because at no time did we control the game. Defensively, we had not been successful.

"We can say that the draw with France was the deserved (result) even if we had the opportunity to lead 2-0. It is regrettable that (Cesc) Fabregas missed his penalty.

Whilst all eyes are on Barca and Real, don't forget the fairytale of Malaga

SPAIN La Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games (Most recent first)
1 Barcelona	28	24	2	2	88	31	+57	74	W W L W W
2 Real Madrid	28	19	4	5	71	27	+44	61	W W W W W
3 Atlético Madrid	28	19	3	6	50	24	+26	60	W L D W W
4 Real Sociedad	28	13	8	7	49	35	+14	47	W W D W D
5 Valencia	28	13	6	9	41	40	+1	45	W L D D W
6 Málaga	28	12	8	8	38	27	+11	44	L D D L W
7 Real Betis	28	13	4	11	39	42	-3	43	L W D W L
8 Getafe	28	12	6	10	38	44	-6	42	W D W W W
9 Rayo Vallecano	28	13	2	13	37	46	-9	41	L W D L L
10 Sevilla	28	11	5	12	43	40	+3	38	W L W L W
11 Levante	28	10	7	11	33	41	-8	37	D D D L D
12 Real Valladolid	28	9	8	11	36	38	-2	35	L D D W L
13 Espanyol	28	9	8	11	33	37	-4	35	W L D L W
14 Athletic Club	28	9	5	14	32	51	-19	32	L W W L L
15 Granada	28	7	7	14	26	39	-13	28	D D L L L
16 Osasuna	28	7	7	14	23	32	-9	28	L L L W W
17 Real Zaragoza	28	7	5	16	25	42	-17	26	L D L D L
18 Mallorca	28	6	6	16	30	55	-25	24	L W W L L
19 Celta de Vigo	28	6	5	17	27	41	-14	23	L L L W L
20 Deportivo La C…	28	4	8	16	32	59	-27	20	W L D L L

Latest Results	Next Match
Deportivo 3 - 1 Celta Vigo	Rayo Vallecano v Málaga
R Sociedad 4 - 1 R Valladolid	Celta Vigo v Barcelona
Getafe 1 - 0 Athletic Club	Real Zaragoza v Real Madrid
Real Madrid 5 - 2 Mallorca	Levante v Sevilla
Valencia 3 - 0 Real Betis	Real Valladolid v Osasuna
Málaga 0 - 2 Espanyol	Mallorca v Deportivo
Sevilla 4 - 0 Real Zaragoza	Espanyol v Real Sociedad
Osasuna 0 - 2 At Madrid	Atlético Madrid v Valencia
Granada 1 - 1 Levante	Athletic Club v Granada
Barcelona 3 - 1 R Vallecano	Real Betis v Getafe

One To Watch This Weekend...

On March 27, France host Spain in the battle for automatic 2014 World Cup qualification in Europe's Group I. The 2 teams are level on 7 points at the top of their group, 3 points clear and 1 game in hand on 3rd placed Georgia. Late last year, "La Roja" (Spain – "The Reds") hosted "Les Bleus" (France – "The Blues") in this group, the result was a 1-1 draw, after a late equaliser from the visitors. The match can be seen live on Setanta Sports, with coverage beginning at 6.50am Wednesday morning AET time.

CROATIA 1.HNL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Dinamo Zagreb	24	16	4	4	49	18	+31	52	D D W W W
2 Lokomotiva	24	12	6	6	40	29	+11	42	W W L W D
3 Hajduk Split	24	11	7	6	34	19	+15	40	D L W L W
4 Rijeka	24	11	7	6	33	29	+4	40	W W D D L
5 Split	24	11	5	8	37	28	+9	38	D W D L W
6 Slaven Koprivnica	24	9	6	9	30	35	-5	33	D L L D L
7 Osijek	24	6	12	6	21	20	+1	30	D D D D L
8 Istra 1961	24	6	9	9	22	26	-4	27	D W D D D
9 Zadar	24	6	6	12	25	43	-18	24	D L W L W
10 Cibalia	24	6	5	13	20	34	-14	23	L W L D W
11 Zagreb	24	6	4	14	21	44	-23	22	L L W W L
12 Inter Zaprešic	24	4	9	11	25	32	-7	21	D L L D L

TURKEY Süper Lig

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Galatasaray	26	14	8	4	49	29	+20	50	W L D W W
2 Fenerbahçe	26	13	7	6	45	30	+15	46	W W L W W
3 Beşiktaş	26	11	10	5	52	38	+14	43	L D W W D
4 Bursaspor	26	10	10	6	40	34	+6	40	W L W L W
5 Kasımpaşa	26	11	7	8	38	28	+10	40	W D W L W
6 Gençlerbirliği	26	9	10	7	38	36	+2	37	W W D L W
7 Antalyaspor	26	11	4	11	40	39	+1	37	L L W L D
8 Eskişehirspor	26	8	12	6	40	31	+9	36	D D D D L
9 Kayserispor	26	10	6	10	34	36	-2	36	L D W W W
10 Sivasspor	26	9	5	12	28	34	-6	32	L W L L L
11 Gaziantepspor	26	8	8	10	30	42	-12	32	W D L W D
12 İstanbul BB	26	8	8	10	33	32	+1	32	W D D D D
13 Trabzonspor	26	8	7	11	28	32	-4	31	L D L W L
14 Elazığspor	26	7	10	9	23	37	-14	31	D W W W L
15 Karabükspor	26	8	6	12	31	42	-11	30	L D L L D
16 Orduspor	26	6	11	9	31	34	-3	29	L L W L D
17 Akhisar Beledi…	26	6	8	12	23	36	-13	26	W D L W L
18 Mersin İdmanyurdu	26	4	9	13	27	40	-13	21	L D L L L

SERBIA Super Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Partizan	19	16	1	2	54	12	+42	49	W W W W D
2 Crvena Zvezda	19	12	2	5	38	26	+12	38	L W D W L
3 Vojvodina	18	9	8	1	20	12	+8	35	D W W W D
4 Jagodina	18	10	2	6	20	15	+5	32	L W L W W
5 Rad Beograd	18	7	7	4	21	14	+7	28	D D D D W
6 Sloboda Užice	18	7	7	4	22	22	+0	28	D W D W L
7 Javor Ivanjica	19	8	3	8	29	19	+10	27	L D W L W
8 Spartak Subotica	18	6	6	6	25	21	+4	24	D L D D L
9 Radnički Niš	19	6	6	7	18	28	-10	24	W W W D D
10 Novi Pazar	19	5	7	7	20	24	-4	22	W L W D L
11 OFK Beograd	19	6	4	9	20	24	-4	22	L L L D W
12 Hajduk Kula	19	5	4	10	22	24	-2	19	L W L W W
13 BSK Borča	19	5	3	11	19	43	-24	18	W D L L L
14 Donji Srem	18	4	5	9	13	22	-9	17	D L D L L
15 Radnički 1923 …	19	3	7	9	16	27	-11	16	W L L D L
16 Smederevo	19	1	6	12	9	33	-24	9	L D L L L

GERMANY Bundesliga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Bayern München	26	22	3	1	69	11	+58	69	W W W W W
2 Borussia Dortmund	26	14	7	5	60	31	+29	49	W L W D W
3 Bayer Leverkusen	26	13	6	7	46	34	+12	45	L L W D W
4 Eintracht Fran…	26	11	6	9	39	37	+2	39	L D L D L
5 Schalke 04	26	11	6	9	43	43	+0	39	L W W W D
6 Mainz 05	26	10	8	8	33	29	+4	38	D W D D D
7 Borussia M'gla…	26	9	11	6	35	35	+0	38	W D W D L
8 Hamburger SV	26	11	5	10	30	34	-4	38	L W D L W
9 Freiburg	26	9	9	8	33	33	+0	36	L L D D W
10 Hannover 96	26	10	4	12	47	46	+1	34	L D L W D
11 Nürnberg	26	8	10	8	29	32	-3	34	W W D D D
12 Stuttgart	26	9	5	12	28	44	-16	32	W L L D W
13 Wolfsburg	26	8	7	11	30	40	-10	31	D W L D L
14 Werder Bremen	26	8	6	12	42	51	-9	30	D D L L L
15 Fortuna Düsseldorf	26	7	8	11	32	36	-4	29	D L D L W
16 Augsburg	26	5	9	12	23	38	-15	24	W L W W L
17 Hoffenheim	26	5	5	16	30	49	-19	20	D W L L L
18 Greuther Fürth	26	2	9	15	16	42	-26	15	D L D D L

HOLLAND Eredivisie

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Ajax	27	16	9	2	62	27	+35	57	W W W D W
2 PSV	27	18	2	7	83	29	+54	56	W L W L W
3 Feyenoord	27	17	5	5	53	33	+20	56	W W W W L
4 Vitesse	27	16	6	5	55	31	+24	54	W W W W W
5 Twente	27	13	8	6	43	25	+18	47	W L L L D
6 Utrecht	27	13	6	8	40	31	+9	45	L W L W L
7 ADO Den Haag	27	8	12	7	42	48	-6	36	L D W D W
8 NEC	27	10	6	11	36	45	-9	36	L L L W L
9 Heerenveen	27	9	8	10	41	48	-7	35	W W W W L
10 Heracles	27	8	10	9	52	53	-1	34	W W L L D
11 NAC Breda	27	8	7	12	32	43	-11	31	W D L W D
12 Groningen	27	8	6	13	25	43	-18	30	L D L W L
13 PEC Zwolle	27	7	8	12	30	43	-13	29	W L W L W
14 AZ	27	6	8	13	38	47	-9	26	L D L L D
15 RKC Waalwijk	27	6	8	13	27	36	-9	26	L L W L L
16 Roda JC	27	5	10	12	38	54	-16	25	L L W L D
17 VVV	27	5	7	15	28	54	-26	22	L L L W W
18 Willem II	27	3	8	16	24	59	-35	17	L W L L D

SCOTLAND SPL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Celtic	31	20	5	6	74	29	+45	65	W L L W D
2 Motherwell	31	14	8	9	51	41	+10	50	W D W W L
3 Inverness CT	31	11	14	6	56	48	+8	47	W D D D W
4 Ross County	31	11	12	8	40	38	+2	45	L W D W W
5 St. Johnstone	31	11	11	9	38	37	+1	44	W L D W D
6 Hibernian	31	10	10	11	39	42	-3	40	L D D D W
7 Dundee United	31	9	13	9	46	51	-5	40	D D D D W
8 Kilmarnock	30	9	11	10	44	40	+4	38	L D D W D
9 Aberdeen	31	9	11	11	36	40	-4	38	L D L D W
10 Heart of Midlo…	31	8	10	13	30	41	-11	34	D W L L L
11 St. Mirren	30	8	9	13	36	47	-11	33	D L W L L
12 Dundee	31	4	8	19	20	56	-36	20	D D W D L

THE CHAMPIONSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Cardiff City	37	23	6	8	60	38	+22	75	W D D L W
2 Hull City	38	21	5	12	55	45	+10	68	L W L W L
3 Watford	38	20	6	12	72	48	+24	66	L L W D W
4 Crystal Palace	38	18	11	9	67	49	+18	65	L D W W L
5 Nottingham Forest	38	16	12	10	56	48	+8	60	W W W W W
6 Leicester City	38	17	8	13	59	34	+25	59	L D L D L
7 Brighton & Hov…	38	15	14	9	54	38	+16	59	W L L D W
8 Bolton Wanderers	38	14	12	12	55	50	+5	54	L W W W W
9 Middlesbrough	38	17	3	18	55	58	-3	54	L L L W L
10 Leeds United	38	14	10	14	49	54	-5	52	L D D D W
11 Burnley	38	13	10	15	50	51	-1	49	D L D W L
12 Birmingham City	38	12	13	13	50	59	-9	49	W W D L W
13 Derby County	38	12	12	14	54	54	+0	48	W L D L L
14 Millwall	36	13	8	15	46	52	-6	47	W L L W L
15 Charlton Athletic	38	12	11	15	46	52	-6	47	L W D L L
16 Huddersfield Town	38	12	11	15	40	64	-24	47	W L W L W
17 Blackpool	38	11	13	14	53	52	+1	46	L W D D D
18 Blackburn Rovers	37	11	13	13	45	48	-3	46	D L L L D
19 Ipswich Town	38	12	10	16	36	55	-19	46	W D L W D
20 Barnsley	37	12	8	17	47	58	-11	44	W W D L L
21 Sheffield Wedn…	37	12	7	18	41	52	-11	43	L W L L W
22 Peterborough U…	38	12	6	20	55	64	-9	42	W D D D W
23 Wolverhampton …	38	11	9	18	45	54	-9	42	W L W D L
24 Bristol City	38	11	6	21	54	67	-13	39	L W D D W

LEAGUE ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Doncaster Rovers	38	20	9	9	54	37	+17	69	D W L W W
2 Brentford	38	18	13	7	51	37	+14	67	W W L L W
3 Swindon Town	38	18	12	8	63	29	+34	66	W L D W L
4 Sheffield United	37	17	14	6	50	33	+17	65	L D W D W
5 AFC Bournemouth	39	18	10	11	61	50	+11	64	W W L L L
6 Tranmere Rovers	39	18	9	12	55	42	+13	63	L L W L D
7 Yeovil Town	38	19	6	13	59	47	+12	63	L D D W L
8 Coventry City	39	17	9	13	62	47	+15	60	W D W L W
9 Walsall	39	16	12	11	58	53	+5	60	D W D W W
10 Leyton Orient	39	18	6	15	47	43	+4	60	W W W D W
11 Notts County	39	14	15	10	52	39	+13	57	W L D D W
12 Milton Keynes Don	38	14	12	12	52	42	+10	54	L W L D W
13 Crewe Alexandra	37	15	9	13	46	49	-3	54	W D W L L
14 Crawley Town	37	14	11	12	48	50	-2	53	D D D D W
15 Stevenage	39	14	7	18	44	53	-9	49	L W L L W
16 Preston North End	37	11	13	13	46	45	+1	46	L W W D D
17 Carlisle United	38	12	9	17	45	65	-20	45	L W D L L
18 Shrewsbury Town	39	10	14	15	44	51	-7	44	D W L L L
19 Colchester United	39	12	7	20	41	60	-19	43	W D L D W
20 Oldham Athletic	37	11	6	20	38	50	-12	39	W L L L W
21 Scunthorpe United	38	10	8	20	39	61	-22	38	L L L W L
22 Bury	38	7	12	19	36	58	-22	33	W L L L W
23 Hartlepool United	39	7	11	21	33	61	-28	32	L L D D L
24 Portsmouth	39	7	10	22	40	62	-22	31	D L W W D

LEAGUE TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Gillingham	39	20	12	7	57	31	+26	72	D D D W D
2 Port Vale	39	19	10	10	69	41	+28	67	W L L D L
3 Burton Albion	39	19	9	11	61	51	+10	66	D W W L W
4 Cheltenham Town	39	17	13	9	53	46	+7	64	W L W W D
5 Exeter City	39	18	9	12	59	47	+12	63	W D D L W
6 Northampton Town	38	18	8	12	58	49	+9	62	D W L W W
7 Rotherham United	38	18	7	13	61	54	+7	61	L D L W D
8 Fleetwood Town	39	14	13	12	47	43	+4	55	L L W D L
9 Southend United	39	15	10	14	53	45	+8	55	L D L W D
10 Oxford United	39	16	7	16	50	55	-5	55	L W W L W
11 Bradford City	38	14	12	12	50	44	+6	54	W L D D D
12 Chesterfield	39	14	11	14	45	38	+7	53	L W W L W
13 Morecambe	39	13	12	14	51	52	-1	51	D D L W L
14 Bristol Rovers	39	14	9	16	51	59	-8	51	W W L W W
15 Wycombe W	38	14	7	17	45	54	-9	49	L D L W W
16 Dagenham & Red	39	12	11	16	51	53	-2	47	D D W L D
17 Rochdale	39	12	11	16	55	61	-6	47	D L D W L
18 AFC Wimbledon	39	12	9	18	46	68	-22	45	L W W W L
19 Plymouth Argyle	39	10	13	16	41	49	-8	43	W W D L W
20 Torquay United	39	10	13	16	44	51	-7	43	W D D L D
21 Accrington Stanley	39	11	10	18	43	60	-17	43	W W L L D
22 Barnet	39	11	10	18	43	52	-9	43	W L L W L
23 York City	39	8	17	14	41	56	-15	41	L D L L D
24 Aldershot Town	39	9	13	17	35	50	-15	40	L L D D D

Greece Super League

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Olympiakos Piraeus	26	22	3	1	57	14	+43	69	W W W W W
2 Asteras Tripolis	26	16	5	5	37	16	+21	53	W W W W W
3 PAOK	26	15	7	4	41	19	+22	52	W W W W D
4 Atromitos	26	10	11	5	23	19	+4	41	L L W D D
5 PAS Giannina	26	10	8	8	24	20	+4	38	W W L D D
6 Panathinaikos	26	9	10	7	28	26	+2	35	L W W W L
7 Xanthi	26	9	7	10	24	23	+1	34	W L W L L
8 Panionios	26	10	1	15	29	36	-7	31	L W L W L
9 Levadiakos	26	8	6	12	19	31	-12	30	D L L L D
10 Platanias	26	8	6	12	26	33	-7	30	W L L W W
11 AEK Athens	26	8	5	13	21	30	-9	29	W L L L D
12 OFI	26	7	7	12	27	38	-11	28	D D L L L
13 Veria	26	6	9	11	21	30	-9	27	L D W W L
14 Panthrakikos	26	7	5	14	22	31	-9	26	L L L L D
15 Aris	26	5	10	11	26	39	-13	25	L W L L W
16 Kerkyra	26	4	8	14	14	34	-20	20	L L W L W

France Ligue 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 PSG	29	17	7	5	53	20	+33	58	D W L W L
2 Olympique Lyonnais	29	15	8	6	48	30	+18	53	L D D W W
3 Olympique Mars…	29	15	6	8	34	32	+2	51	D D W L W
4 Saint-Étienne	29	13	10	6	48	23	+25	49	D D W W D
5 Nice	29	13	9	7	41	33	+8	48	L W L W W
6 Lille	29	12	10	7	41	30	+11	46	L W W W W
7 Montpellier	29	13	6	10	44	35	+9	45	D L W W W
8 Lorient	29	11	10	8	47	44	+3	43	W L D L W
9 Bordeaux	29	10	12	7	28	24	+4	42	D W L L L
10 Rennes	29	12	6	11	41	39	+2	42	L D L D L
11 Toulouse	29	9	11	9	33	32	+1	38	D W D D D
12 Valenciennes	29	9	9	11	37	41	-4	36	D L D D L
13 Ajaccio	29	8	11	10	30	37	-7	33	D W L L D
14 Bastia	29	9	6	14	34	53	-19	33	W L W D L
15 Evian TG	29	7	9	13	32	41	-9	30	W W D L L
16 Reims	29	7	9	13	26	35	-9	30	W L W L D
17 Brest	29	8	5	16	28	42	-14	29	L L D W D
18 Sochaux	29	7	7	15	30	46	-16	28	D L L D W
19 Troyes	29	4	12	13	34	51	-17	24	D W L D D
20 Nancy	29	5	9	15	26	47	-21	24	W L W L L

Portugal Premeira Liga

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	Last5games Most recent first
1 Benfica	23	19	4	0	60	14	+46	61	W W W W W
2 Porto	23	17	6	0	52	11	+41	57	D W D W W
3 Sporting Braga	23	13	4	6	50	31	+19	43	W W W W D
4 Paços de Ferreira	23	11	9	3	32	20	+12	42	W D W L D
5 Estoril	23	9	4	10	34	31	+3	31	W L W W L
6 Rio Ave	23	8	6	9	26	30	-4	30	L D L L D
7 Marítimo	23	7	9	7	24	34	-10	30	D L D W W
8 Vitória Guimarães	23	8	6	9	26	38	-12	30	L W W L W
9 Nacional	23	7	7	9	34	38	-4	28	D D W W D
10 Sporting CP	23	6	9	8	23	27	-4	27	W D D L W
11 Vitória Setúbal	23	6	5	12	25	43	-18	23	L L L W W
12 Académica	23	4	9	10	28	36	-8	21	L D L L L
13 Moreirense	23	4	8	11	22	36	-14	20	W D D D L
14 Gil Vicente	23	4	7	12	22	41	-19	19	L L L D L
15 Olhanense	23	3	9	11	23	35	-12	18	L D L L L
16 Beira-Mar	23	3	8	12	26	42	-16	17	D D L L L

One Game At A Time

France
PSG v Montpellier
Troyes v Saint-Étienne
Ajaccio v Toulouse
Evian TG v Reims
Bordeaux v Lorient
Rennes v Nancy
Valenciennes v Bastia
Nice v Olympique Mars…
Brest v Lille
Olympique Lyonnais v Sochaux

Germany
Schalke 04 v Hoffenheim
Stuttgart v Borussia Dortmund
Freiburg v Borussia M'gla…
Mainz 05 v Werder Bremen
Augsburg v Hannover 96
Fortuna Düsseldorf v Bayer Leverkusen
Bayern München v Hamburger SV
Wolfsburg v Nürnberg
Greuther Fürth v Eintracht Fran…

Croatia
Lokomotiva v Inter Zaprešic
Osijek v Istra 1961
Rijeka v Slaven Koprivnica
Split v Cibalia
Dinamo Zagreb v Zadar
Hajduk Split v Zagreb

Serbia
Vojvodina v Donji Srem
Sloboda Užice v Jagodina
Hajduk Kula v Partizan
OFK Beograd v Sloboda Užice
Jagodina v Vojvodina
Donji Srem v Javor Ivanjica
BSK Borča v Rad Beograd
Spartak Subotica v Novi Pazar
Smederevo v Radnički Niš
Crvena Zvezda v Radnički 1923 …

English Championship
Watford v Burnley
Blackburn Rovers v Blackpool
Crystal Palace v Birmingham City
Derby County v Bristol City
Leicester City v Millwall
Wolverhampton … v Middlesbrough
Ipswich Town v Leeds United
Sheffield Wedn… v Barnsley
Charlton Athletic v Bolton Wanderers
Nottingham Forest v Brighton & Hov…
Peterborough U… v Cardiff City
Huddersfield Town v Hull City

English League One
Sheffield United v Brentford
Shrewsbury Town v Oldham Athletic
Preston North End v Leyton Orient
Carlisle United v Yeovil Town
Hartlepool United v Walsall
Swindon Town v Notts County
Colchester United v Milton Keynes Dons
Portsmouth v Coventry City
AFC Bournemouth v Bury
Crawley Town v Crewe Alexandra
Scunthorpe United v Doncaster Rovers
Tranmere Rovers v Stevenage

English League Two
Port Vale v Aldershot Town
Bradford City v Bristol Rovers
AFC Wimbledon v Morecambe
Burton Albion v Wycombe Wanderers
Chesterfield v Plymouth Argyle
Rotherham United v Exeter City
Torquay United v York City
Fleetwood Town v Dagenham & Red…
Barnet v Cheltenham Town
Gillingham v Accrington Stanley
Rochdale v Southend United
Northampton Town v Oxford United

Scotland
Aberdeen v Heart of Midlo…
Hibernian v Inverness CT
Ross County v Kilmarnock
Dundee v Motherwell
St. Mirren v Celtic
St. Johnstone v Dundee United

Greece
Aris v Panthrakikos
OFI v PAS Giannina
Panathinaikos v Platanias
Xanthi v Atromitos
Veria v Kerkyra
Levadiakos v AEK Athens
Olympiakos Piraeus v PAOK
Panionios v Asteras Tripolis

Turkey
Gaziantepspor v Eskişehirspor
Sivasspor v Orduspor
Galatasaray v İstanbul BB
Kasımpaşa v Bursaspor
Trabzonspor v Antalyaspor
Fenerbahçe v Akhisar Beledi…
Elazığspor v Gençlerbirliği
Karabükspor v Kayserispor
Mersin İdmanyurdu v Beşiktaş
Antalyaspor v Kasımpaşa

Holland
Twente v NAC Breda
Willem II v Groningen
Utrecht v VVV
Heerenveen v Feyenoord
Roda JC v PSV
Vitesse v PEC Zwolle
RKC Waalwijk v ADO Den Haag
Heracles v AZ
Ajax v NEC

Portugal
Benfica v Rio Ave
Vitória Setúbal v Marítimo
Sporting Braga v Sporting CP
Moreirense v Estoril
Académica v Porto
Beira-Mar v Olhanense
Nacional v Vitória Guimarães
Paços de Ferreira v Gil Vicente

...Results...Results....Results.....Results....Results....Results...Results...Results...Results...Results...Results...

THE CHAMPIONSHIP
Leeds United 1 - 2 Huddersfield Town
Charlton Athletic 0 - 2 Millwall
Sheffield Wedn… 0 - 2 Cardiff City
Blackpool 0 - 1 Peterborough U…
Barnsley 1 - 0 Watford
Middlesbrough 0 - 1 Birmingham City
Ipswich Town 1 - 0 Bolton Wanderers
Hull City 1 - 2 Nottingham Forest
Wolverhampton … 2 - 1 Bristol City
Derby County 2 - 1 Leicester City
Brighton & Hov… 3 - 0 Crystal Palace
Blackburn Rovers 1 - 1 Burnley

ENGLISH LEAGUE ONE
Stevenage 4 - 0 Sheffield United
Brentford 1 - 0 Preston North End
Doncaster Rovers 1 - 1 Portsmouth
Crewe Alexandra 1 - 1 Shrewsbury Town
Oldham Athletic 0 - 1 AFC Bournemouth
Notts County 1 - 0 Scunthorpe United
Coventry City 1 - 0 Hartlepool United
Bury 1 - 2 Colchester United
Walsall 2 - 2 Crawley Town
Milton Keynes Dons 3 - 0 Tranmere Rovers
Leyton Orient 4 - 1 Carlisle United
Bury 2-0 Stevenage
Crewe Alexandra 2-1 Milton Keynes Dons
Oldham Athletic 3-0 Hartlepool United
Yeovil Town 0-2 Swindon Town

ENGLISH LEAGUE TWO
Dagenham & Red… 1 - 1 Burton Albion
Plymouth Argyle 2 - 1 Fleetwood Town
Oxford United 0 - 1 Chesterfield
Bristol Rovers 2 - 1 Rochdale
Southend United 1 - 1 Torquay United
Cheltenham Town 3 - 0 Rotherham United
Accrington Stanley 3 - 2 Barnet
Aldershot Town 0 - 1 AFC Wimbledon
Exeter City 4 - 1 Bradford City
Morecambe 1 - 1 Gillingham
York City 0 - 2 Port Vale

Mid Week
Accrington Stanley 4-0 AFC Wimbledon
Southend United 0-2 Plymouth Argyle
Rochdale 1-1 Gillingham
Torquay United 2-1 Chesterfield
Bradford City 1-0 Wycombe Wanderers
Barnet 2-0 Fleetwood Town

CROATIA
Zagreb 2 - 4 Lokomotiva
Inter Zaprešic 0 - 0 Split
Slaven Koprivnica 0 - 0 Osijek
Cibalia 0 - 1 Rijeka
Istra 1961 0 - 0 Dinamo Zagreb
Zadar 1 - 1 Hajduk Split

FRANCE
Olympique Mars… 0 - 0 Ajaccio
Bastia 4 - 1 Olympique Lyonnais
Lorient 4 - 0 Brest
Sochaux 1 - 1 Valenciennes
Lille 1 - 2 Evian TG
Montpellier 1 - 1 Troyes
Reims 1 - 0 Rennes
Nancy 1 - 0 Nice
Toulouse 0 - 0 Bordeaux
Saint-Étienne 2 - 2 PSG

GERMANY
Stuttgart 0 - 1 Hamburger SV
Wolfsburg 1 - 1 Fortuna Düsseldorf
Borussia Dortmund 5 - 1 Freiburg
Werder Bremen 2 - 2 Greuther Fürth
Nürnberg 3 - 0 Schalke 04
Hoffenheim 0 - 0 Mainz 05
Hamburger SV 0 - 1 Augsburg
Bayer Leverkusen 1 - 2 Bayern München
Eintracht Fran… 1 - 2 Stuttgart
Borussia M'gla… 1 - 0 Hannover 96

GREECE
Olympiakos Piraeus 3 - 0 AEK Athens
Panionios 1 - 0 Atromitos
Levadiakos 1 - 1 OFI
PAS Giannina 2 - 0 Aris
AEK Athens 2 - 1 Veria
Atromitos 0 - 2 Asteras Tripolis
Kerkyra 0 - 1 Olympiakos Piraeus
Platanias 2 - 1 Panionios
PAOK 2 - 0 Panathinaikos
Panthrakikos 0 - 2 Xanthi

HOLLAND
Twente 0 - 1 Vitesse
PEC Zwolle 3 - 2 Roda JC
NEC 1 - 3 Heerenveen
PSV 2 - 0 RKC Waalwijk
VVV 0 - 2 Heracles
ADO Den Haag 0 - 4 Vitesse
NAC Breda 4 - 0 Willem II
Feyenoord 2 - 1 Utrecht
AZ 2 - 3 Ajax
Groningen 0 - 3 Twente

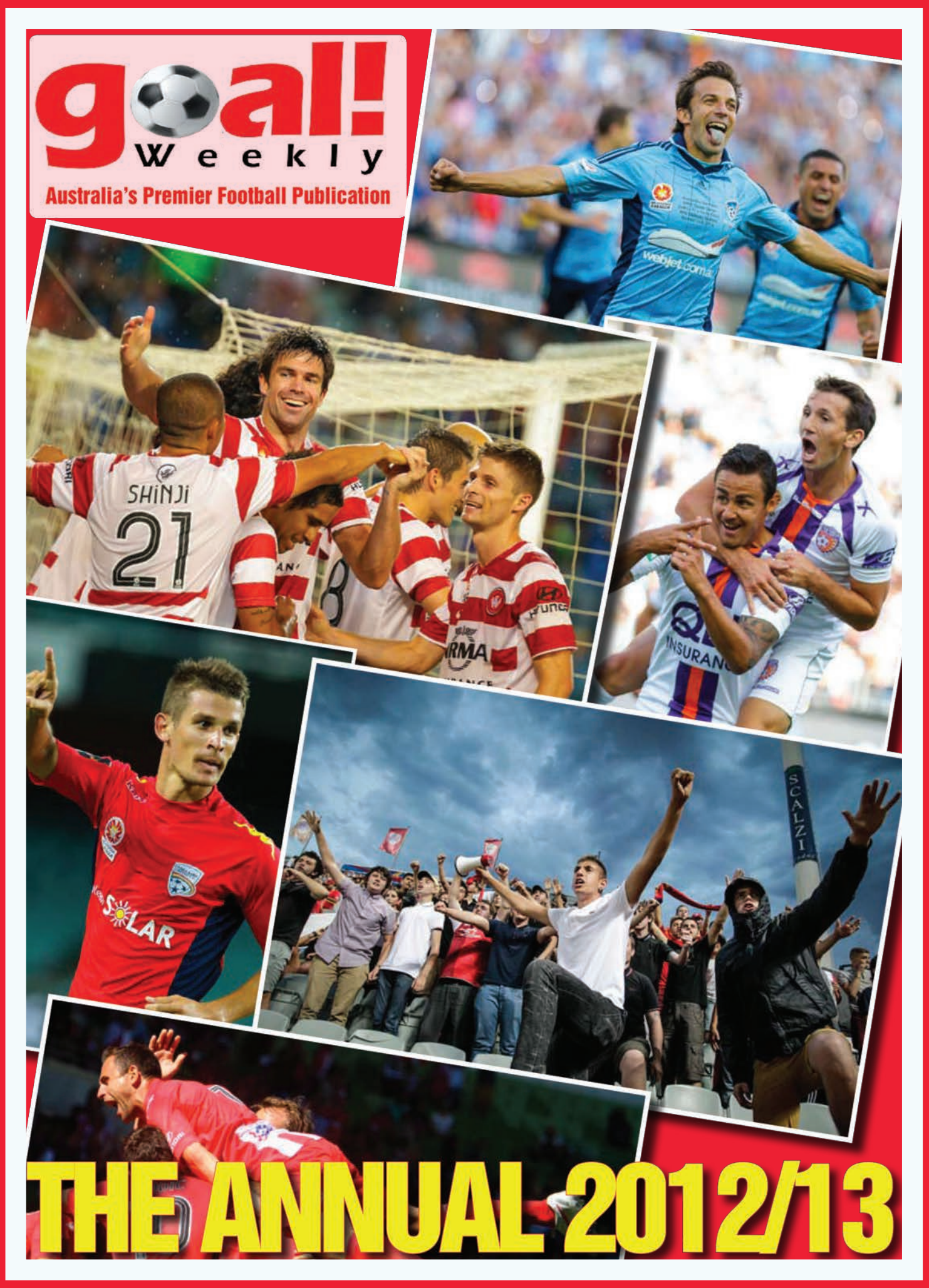
SCOTLAND
Motherwell 4 - 1 Hibernian
Celtic 4 - 3 Aberdeen
Inverness CT 2 - 1 Ross County
Dundee United 1 - 1 Dundee

SERBIA
Hajduk Kula 3 - 0 OFK Beograd
Crvena Zvezda 3 - 0 Novi Pazar
Jagodina 0 - 1 Partizan
Radnički 1923 … 0 - 1 Radnički Niš
Radnički Niš 2 - 1 Crvena Zvezda
Radnički 1923 … 3 - 2 Hajduk Kula
Novi Pazar 2 - 1 Smederevo
Javor Ivanjica 1 - 2 BSK Borča
Partizan 2 - 0 OFK Beograd

TURKEY
Mersin İdmanyurdu 1 - 1 Kasımpaşa
Bursaspor 3 - 2 Trabzonspor
Eskişehirspor 2 - 2 Elazığspor
İstanbul BB 4 - 2 Mersin İdmanyurdu
Gençlerbirliği 2 - 1 Karabükspor
Beşiktaş 1 - 3 Kasımpaşa
Orduspor 2 - 3 Gaziantepspor
Akhisar Beledi… 2 - 1 Sivasspor
Kayserispor 1 - 3 Galatasaray
Antalyaspor 1 - 2 Fenerbahçe

PORTUGAL
Benfica 5 - 0 Gil Vicente
Vitória Setúbal 2 - 3 Vitória Guimarães
Gil Vicente 1 - 3 Sporting Braga
Olhanense 1 - 2 Paços de Ferreira
Sporting CP 2 - 1 Vitória Setúbal
Beira-Mar 2 - 2 Nacional
Estoril 2 - 0 Académica
Rio Ave 0 - 1 Moreirense
Marítimo 1 - 1 Porto
Vitória Guimarães 0 - 4 Benfica

The Goal! Weekly Annual



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